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THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

PRINTED BY R. & G. S. WOOD, 265 PEARL-STREET.

RECOMMENDATORY LETTER

From the Rev. James Milnor, D. D.

Beekman-st. New-York, Nov. 8, 1830.

DEAR SIR,

In answer to your enquiry whether I had brought with me from England any recently published religious work, the republication of which I would recommend, I beg leave to hand you the accompanying volume on "The Christian Ministry," by the Rev. Charles Bridges, and request you to consider my judgment as in favour of its early appearance from the American Press.

Mr. Bridges is a distinguished Clergyman of the Church of England—a man of sterling piety, of the most decidedly evangelical sentiments, and of a catholic spirit towards christians of other denominations. The work is, in my opinion, calculated for general usefulness, but will be found eminently adapted to the use of students preparing for the work of the ministry, and of those already engaged in its sacred duties, who, called to their responsible office by the Holy Spirit, desire to "shew themselves approved unto God as workmen that need not to be ashamed."

Your's sincerely,

JAMES MILNOR.

MR. J. LEAVITT.

THE

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY,

WITH AN

INQUIRY INTO THE CAUSES OF ITS INEFFICIENCY.

BY

THE REV. CHARLES BRIDGES, B. A.
VICAR OF OLD NEWTON, SUFFOLK, AND AUTHOR OF
'EXPOSITION OF PSALM CXIX.'

IN TWO VOLUMES.

FIRST AMERICAN FROM THE SECOND LONDON EDITION
CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:
PUBLISHED BY JONATHAN LEAVITT.
BOSTON:
CROCKER & BREWSTER.

1831.

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PREFACE.

THE work now presented to the Public originated in a letter to a beloved friend upon the interesting subject of Ministerial inefficiency—which, at his desire, and by the disinterested kindness of the Editor of the Christian Observer, was subsequently inserted with a few enlargements in that valuable Miscellany;* from whence an impression was taken off for private circulation. Several applications having been made for its separate publication, the Writer was induced to reconsider the subject in a more extended range, and to avail himself of the suggestions of friends, until the small pamphlet has unconsciously swelled into its present extended dimensions.

As to the Work itself—the Writer desires to be with his brethren "in weakness, and in fear, and much trembling."† He is aware that his proper situation, both in authority and experience, is at the feet of many, who are thus constrained to listen to him; and it would be to him a subject of the most painful regret, were he supposed to advance any pretensions to a higher standard of zeal, earnestness, or Ministerial attainment. He has not described what he is, but what he ought, and what he trusts, he desires, to be—and if, after the model of the Country Parson—he has "set the mark as high

* Christian Observer, March, April, 1828. † 1 Cor. iii. 3.

as he could," it is because "he shoots higher that threatens the moon, than he that aims at a tree."* He has endeavoured, however, to write in the first instance for himself—and to point every arrow of conviction at his own heart—"Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"†

The Writer will be found to have dealt rather largely in illustration—not only, as being more suited to his character than didactic instruction—but as exhibiting that sympathy of care and anxiety, which gives to us a peculiar place in each other's remembrance, an interest in each other's prayers, a witness in each other's hearts.—"The same afflictions are accomplished in our brethren that are in the world."‡

The materials for this work have been brought from different departments of the territory of the Church. Though the Writer has had a special regard to the Ministry of the Establishment, (to which he is bound by the strongest and most endearing ties, and which occupies in his view the most commanding station in the Church of Christ,) yet he would be sorry to refuse a cordial admission, and to neglect a diligent improvement, of the acknowledged excellencies of the honoured men of God in different communions.§ If he should be thought to have been too large in his references, he can only apologize by his anxiety to shelter his own statements (which in themselves could

* G. Herbert's Preface to "The Country Parson."

† Rom. ii. 21. ‡ 1 Pet. v. 9.

§ The Christian spirit in one of the dignified advocates of our Establishment is truly admirable, which admitted the Life of Philip Henry (often referred to in these pages) into his collection of Ecclesiastical Biography—with the admission that any one Nonconformist of superior piety would also have found a place in his work. Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography—Preface, p. xviii.

possess but little weight) by the strength of accredited authority.

After all, he is deeply conscious, that this most responsible work has suffered—perhaps materially—from the unskilfulness of its treatment. He would desire however to be "accepted of his brethren,"* in a sincere attempt to subserve the grand cause, to which they equally with himself are consecrated—and he would beg to express his earnest desires to be favoured with private communications for the improvement of a second edition (should it ever be called for); for which purpose he subjoins his place of residence at full length.

For his work he has no other wish than the Country Parson—'The Lord prosper the intention to myself, and others, who may not despise my poor labours, but add to those points, which I have observed, until the book grows to a complete pastoral.'†

For himself—he would listen to the concluding exhortation of an eminent Minister to his Student and Pastor—'And now, go thy way, O thou son greatly beloved, and work in thy lot lively, and prayerfully and cheerfully to the end of thy days; and wait and look for what the glorious Lord will do for thee at the end of thy days; in those endless joys, wherein thou shalt shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.‡

Old Newton, Stowmarket,
June 22, 1829.

* Esther x. 3. † Preface to 'The Country Parson.'
‡ Conclusion to Mather's 'Student and Pastor.'

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The Writer, while he would acknowledge the kind reception with which his work has been favoured, cannot but regret that the shortness of the interval has precluded him from the advantage of many of those animadversions, by which it might have been considerably improved. He has, however, endeavoured to send it forth a second time, he trusts, with some symptom of amendment, and (in compliance with the suggestions of some kind and judicious friends), with considerable enlargement in the detail of the pastoral department, as well as with the result of a general system of revision throughout. The Writer is most sensible of the many defects of the work, but under present circumstances he has no other course than once more to commend it to the gracious consideration of the Great Head of the Church, with an earnest desire that he would accept it as an offering for his service, and employ it in however mean a degree for the edification of his church, of that part more especially in whose prosperity the Writer is most deeply interested.

Old Newton,
Oct. 9, 1829.

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PART I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

PART I.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

CHAPTER I.

THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND INSTITUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE Church is the mirror that reflects the whole effulgence of the Divine character. It is the grand scene of the display of the Divine Perfections. "To the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known *by the Church* the *manifold wisdom of God.*"* The revelations made to the Church,—the successive grand events in her history—and above all the manifestation of the Divine glory in the Person of the Son of God, furnish to these heavenly intelligences fresh subjects of adoring contemplation. These are things "which they desire to look into."†

The means also employed in the building and preservation of the Church are equally illustrative of the wisdom of their great Author. The exhibition of Divine "strength made perfect in weakness" effectually secures the important end "that no flesh

* Ephes. iii. 10. † 1 Peter, i. 12.

should glory in his presence." A separate order of men were consecrated to the great work of laying the foundation and raising the superstructure of his Church. Twelve only were included in the original institution, with a limited commission, bounded at first, within the scanty extent of "Immanuel's land;" afterwards enlarged with a tender of the promised blessing to "every creature."* As the work increased upon them, the necessity for a corresponding increase of labourers became apparent. And for this purpose, and from the foresight of this exigency, the Divine Mediator had delegated the power of his own commission to his faithful labourers—"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."† Invested therefore with this authority, they "ordained elders in every Church,"‡ (who were acknowledged to be "made overseers over the flock" by the appointment of the Holy Ghost§) and entrusted the same power of ordination successively to others,‖ "according as the matter might require," for the continuance and perpetuity of the Christian ministration. This was evidently agreeable to the purpose of God. The terms of the special promise extend "to the end of the world,"¶ up to which period the necessity of the sacred Institution will remain the same. God has not indeed transferred to men his own Divine right and honour, but he employs them for his work, as a man might make use of any instruments he pleased for his own designs. But as no instrumentality was absolutely needed, his selection from among men of the delegates of his commission, and the representatives of his person,

* Matt. x. 1—6; xxviii. 18—20. Mark xvi. 15.
† John xx. 21. ‡ Acts xiv. 23.
§ Acts xx. 28. ‖ 2 Tim. ii. 2. Titus i. 5. ¶ Matt. xxviii. 20.

must be regarded as an act of favour, while the appointment exercises both our humility in the habit of submission to men of like infirmities with ourselves, and our love in this cementing bond of reciprocal interest.* "Thus every step in the way of our salvation hath on it the print of infinite majesty, wisdom, and goodness; and this among the rest, that men, sinful weak men, are made subservient in that great work of bringing Christ and souls to meet; that by the foolishness of preaching" (or what appears so to carnal wisdom) the chosen of God are called, and come unto Jesus, and are made wise unto salvation; and that the life which is conveyed to them by the word of life in the hands of poor men is by the same means preserved and advanced."†

The most comprehensive view of the Christian Ministry is given in Ephes. iv. 7—16. The grandeur of its introduction is marked to have been long before prefigured by the glorious descent and ascent of Jehovah upon Mount Sinai.‡ Its original grant and institution is traced to the mediatorial work of the Son of God. It is set forth as the fruit of his care, love, and bounty to his Church. The power by which he acquired this gift for his Church was his "descent into the lower parts of the earth"—his work of humiliation, suffering, and death. The proximate cause of its actual communication was his subsequent exaltation to his Mediatorial throne; when "he that descended ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." The pre-eminent character

* Calvin's Instit. Lib. iv. c. iii. 1. Compare Leighton's Exposition of Isaiah vi. 8. Works. Vol. ii. 406, 407, Jerment's edition.
† Leighton on Peter v. 2.
‡ Compare Psalm lxviii. 7—18, with Ephes. iv. 8—10.

of this gift appears in the diversity of offices into which it is distributed ("apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers"); in the important ends for which it was ordained (the advantage of the Church, till it be completed, as one body, under one head); in the rich supply of spiritual blessings both in the deliverance from various threatened evils, and in the closer union and mutual edification of the whole body "growing up into their glorious Head." We cannot well conceive a more entire view that could be given of this institution, nor one that more decisively marks its Divine original.

The subject also affords a striking view of the Unity of Will and Purpose with which the Sacred Persons in the Godhead administer the Government of the Church. To each of them is this holy office traced as its fountain head: "All things are of *God, who hath given* to us the Ministry of reconciliation."* Yet was it also, as we have seen, the gift of his exalted Son—promised to the Church before his departure from the earth,† communicated as the first act of his glorious power in filling all things,‡ and sealed in every instance by his commission conjointly with his Father.§—At the same time the character of this office is emphatically the "the Ministration of the Spirit."‖ It is his authority that calls to the work,¶ his guidance that directs in it,** and his influence that supplies the needful furniture of gifts and graces.†† Thus are the institutions of the Gospel illustrative of its deeper and more mysterious doctrines. "There are diversities of gifts but the *same Spirit.* And there

* 2 Cor. v. 18. † Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.
‡ Psalm lxviii. 18. § Gal. i. 1. ‖ 2 Cor. iii. 9.
¶ Acts xiii. 2. ** Acts xvi. 6, 7. †† 1 Cor. xii. 9.

are differences of administrations, but the *same Lord.* And there are diversities of operations, but the *same God* which worketh all in all."* Thus are the three Persons in the Godhead severally and distinctly glorified. The Ministry of the Church has an equal concern and dependence upon each, and owes equal honour and service to each. Tracing therefore this sacred institution to the footstool of the eternal throne, with what prostration of soul should we bind ourselves to its solemn obligations! What less can any of us say than with the Evangelical Prophet—"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; *for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!*"† One cannot wonder to see the "chiefest of the Apostles" unable to express his overwhelming sense of the responsibility of his work—"Who is sufficient for these things?"‡ Who, whether man or angel, "is sufficient" to open "the wisdom of God in a mystery"——to speak what in its full extent is "unspeakable"—to make known that which "passeth knowledge,"—to bear the fearful responsibility of the care of souls. Who has skill and strength proportionable? Who has a mind and temper to direct and sustain so vast a work? Can any man be found *par negotio?* Who is sufficient? If our Divine Master had not himself answered this appalling question, by his promise—"My grace is sufficient for thee;"§ and if the experience of faith did not in some measure enable us to prove that "our sufficiency is of God;"‖ who would be found, with an enlightened apprehen-

* 1 Cor. xii. 4—6. † Isa. vi. 5. ‡ 2 Cor. ii. 16.
§ 2 Cor. xii. 9. ‖ 2 Cor. iii. 5.

sion, to enter upon such an awful service, or, when entered, to continue in it?

But how solemn is the sanction—infinitely above all human authority——stamped and engraven upon the sacred office! And how tremendous the guilt of rejecting its commission!—"He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."*

CHAPTER II.

THE DIGNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE Divine original of the Christian Ministry has already opened a view of its dignity far above any earthly honour or elevation. The institution that was introduced into the world, and confirmed to the Church, with such solemn preparation—that is conversant with the interests, and entrusted with the charge, of immortal souls——that is ordained as the main instrument for the renovation of the world, and the building up of the Church——cannot be of inferior eminence. The office of "fellow-worker with God"† would have been no mean honour to have conferred upon the archangel nearest the everlasting throne. It formed the calling, the work, and the delight of the Lord of glory during the last years of his abode upon earth, and was established by himself as the standing ordinance in his own Church, and the medium of the revelation of his will to the end of time. Not

* Luke x. 16. † 1 Cor. iii. 9. 2 Cor. vi. 1.

that he 'called his ministers,' as the judicious Calvin has observed, 'into the function of teaching, that, after they have brought the Church under, they may usurp to themselves the government but that he may use their faithful diligence to associate the same to himself. This is a great and excellent thing for men to be set over the Church, that they may present the person of the Son of God.'* The dignity, however, of the sacred office belongs to a "kingdom that cometh not with observation"—"a kingdom not of this world."† It is distinguished therefore not by the glitter of outward shew, but by results connected with eternity, and productive in their present influence of happiness, far more solid and permanent than lies within the grasp of men to attain, or to communicate.‡ It has been well remarked to be 'the highest dignity, if not the greatest happiness, that human nature is capable of here in this vale below, to have the soul so far enlightened as to become the mirror, or conduit, or conveyer of God's truth to others.'§ The right consideration, however, of this high elevation, so far from fostering a vain-glorious spirit, has a direct tendency to deepen self-abasement and reverence. Can we help recoiling from so exalted an office—from handling such high and holy things? What! We to convey life who ourselves are dead! We so defiled, to administer a service so pure, so purifying! "Woe is me"—said one of old, in contrasting this honour with his personal meanness, "for I am undone; for I am a

* Calv on John iii. 29. † Luke xvii. 20. John xviii. 36.

‡ The honourable designations of the sacred office are beautifully illustrated in Burnet's Pastoral Care, ch. 1. Compare also, Chrysostom De Sacerdotio, book iii. and Gregory Nazianzen's Oration, appended usually to Chrysostom.

§ Mather's Student and Pastor, p. 161.

man of uuclean lips!"* We cannot therefore think of this vast commission—this momentous trust, but as an act of bounty and most undeserved favour—"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is *this grace given.*" "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry."†

But let the *remembrance* of this *sacred dignity* give a *deeper tone of decision* to our ministrations—"As we were allowed of God," said the great Apostle, "to be put in trust with the Gospel, *even so we speak,* not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."‡ Let it also connect itself in our mind with most *responsible obligations*—Let us watch, that we disgrace not the dignity of our calling. Let us live under the constraint of its high obligations—"Ye are the salt of the earth—Let not the salt lose its savour. Ye are the light of the world—let your light shine before men"—are the impressive exhortations of our Great Master.§ "Neglect not" said the great Apostle—"the gift of God that is in thee: stir it up"‖ with the daily exercises of faith, self-denial, and prayer. As Quesnel observes¶—'What courage, what boldness, what freedom ought the dignity of the Ministry to give a bishop or priest; not for his own interests, but for those of the Church; not through pride, but fidelity; not while he employs carnal means, but while he makes use of the armour of God.' 'The moment we permit ourselves to think lightly of the Christian ministry, our right-arm is withered;

* Isa. vi. 5.
† Eph. iii. 8. 1 Tim. i. 12.
‡ 1 Thess. ii. 4.
§ Matt. v. 13—16.
‖ 1 Tim. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6.
¶ On 2 Cor. iii. 8.

nothing but imbecility and relaxation remains.'* And let *the weight of this dignity be relieved by Evangelical encouragement*—The ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness constitutes the chief glory of the evangelical economy. "Therefore," says the Apostle, after an exhibition of its preeminent excellency, "seeing *we have this ministry*," so richly endowed, so freely vouchsafed, "as we have received mercy, *we faint not.*†

The views of Philip Henry were truly worthy of this high character. Thus he wrote on the day of his ordination—'I did this day receive *as much honor and work* as ever I shall be able to know what to do with. Lord Jesus, proportion supplies accordingly.' Two scriptures he desired might be written in his heart. 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5. and 2 Chron. xxix. 11. And so practically influential were these views in maintaining a course of deep-toned humility, 'that he laid himself out with as much diligence and vigour,' in a very contracted sphere, 'as if he had the oversight of the greatest and most considerable parish in the country.'‡ Oh! for an abundant supply of such Ministers in every department of the Church of God!

* Hall on the Discouragements and Supports of the Ministry, p. 51.

† 2 Cor. iv. 1.

‡ P. Henry's Life, (Williams's Edition, p. 38.) which Dr. Chalmers has justly characterized, as "one of the most precious religious biographies in our language."

CHAPTER III.

THE USES AND NECESSITY OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

'BECAUSE the nature of things, consisting as this doth in action, is known by the object whereabout they are conversant, and by the end or scope whereunto they are referred, we must know that the object of this function is both God and men: God, in that he is publicly worshipped of his church; and men, in that they are capable of happiness by means, which Christian discipline appointeth. So that the sum of our whole labour in this kind is to honour God and to save men.'* These two ends most harmoniously combine in the Divine purpose respecting the formation of the church—"I will place *salvation* in Zion for Israel *my glory*."† For this end he has ordained the ministry of the word for the planting and watering‡ of his church. The epistles were written to the respective churches, which had been planted by the preaching of the gospel—to supply the place of his oral ministry—to reduce them to church order and unity—to confirm them in Christian steadfastness, and to advance them to Christian perfection. The several individuals also who were addressed were the fruits of the Christian ministry. Timothy, Titus, and Philemon appear to have been "begotten in Christ Jesus," through the ministry of Paul, as were probably "the elect lady and her

* Hooker, book v. 76. † Isa. xlvi. 13.
‡ See 1 Cor. iii. 6.

children," and the beloved Gaius the seal of the apostleship of John.*

Thus has this Divine institution regard to the continual progress of the church, both in its collective body and in the several states of its individual members. It was given not only or chiefly for the calling, but "for the perfecting of the saints:" not for the gathering together the several members, but "for the edifying of the body of Christ."† There was not only a foundation to be laid, but a building to be raised. Elementary truths were to be carried to perfection—"We speak wisdom among them that are perfect."‡ Constant superintendency was needed even in the flourishing churches of God. Paul heard of something that was "lacking in the faith" of his beloved Thessalonians, and he longed to apply to their case the wholesome administration of the Christian Ministry.§ Peter wrote his second epistle to those that were established in the faith, yet "he would not on that account be negligent to put them *always* in remembrance of these things."‖ For the same reason the beloved disciple wrote to the church; "not," said he, "because ye know not the truth, but *because ye know it.*"¶

The general uses of the Christian Ministry are therefore sufficiently obvious. It is the appointed channel of communication from the head to the body in its several members, by which the spiritual life is first imparted, and subsequently maintained with increasing influence of consolation and fruitfulness.

* See the inscriptions to the several epistles to these individuals, and Philemon 19.

† Eph. iv. 12. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 6. Comp. Heb. vi. 1, 2.
§ 1 Thess. iii. 10, 11. ‖ 2 Pet. i. 12. ¶ 1 John ii. 21.

Its more specific uses may be readily collected from the various scripture illustrations of the office—each bearing a relation to the nature of the ministration, and the necessities of those ministered unto. If the church is called a flock, the Minister is the pastor to "seek that which is lost—to strengthen the diseased—to heal the sick—to bring again that which was driven away; in a word, to shepherd the flock in all the exercises of tenderness, consideration, and care, that connect themselves with this endearing character.* If the family of Christ are an household, the Minister is the steward faithful and wise,"† dispensing the provision of the house according to the necessities of its several members. If the Church of God be a city, he is the watchman‡ to wake and warn slumberers of their peril. If it be a husbandry, he is the "labourer,"§ to plant and water the soil—to cleanse the earth—to watch the growth of the plant—and instrumentally to bring forward the harvest. If it be a building, he is the "Master-builder,"‖—to build upon the "sure foundation" lively stones—a spiritual house—"growing into an holy temple of the Lord, builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."¶ If there be a treaty of peace to be negociated between the Majesty of heaven and a world of rebels, he is the ambassador entrusted with "the Ministry of reconciliation," and praying them in Christ's stead—"Be ye reconciled unto God."**

We do not limit the infinite extent and power of the Divine operations, when we speak of the necessity of the Christian Ministry. The uses of this

* Ezek. xxxiv. 4. † Luke xii. 42. ‡ Ezek. xxxiii. 7.
§ 1 Cor. iii. 9. ‖ 1 Cor. iii. 10.
¶ 1 Pet. ii. 5. Eph. ii. 20, 22. ** 2 Cor. v. 20.

sacred institution, to which we have just referred, are not and cannot be necessary to God, as if he were unable to work without them. But they are such as he has made necessary in the constituted order of means. They are the means of his own appointment for the accomplishment of his own purposes of mercy to the world. The order of ministers is, by the sovereign pleasure of God, the first link of means in the chain of salvation, so that without it there would be no Ministry—consequently, no hearing of the word—no faith in the only Saviour of whom it speaks—no calling upon his name—no salvation.* The destitution therefore of the Ministry of the word is the dark sign of the departure of the Divine presence from his church.† It is not our province to prescribe what God might have done, but to mark the consummate wisdom of what he has done, and when we cannot discern the reasons of his dispensations, to exercise the humility of faith. The Lord might have instructed as well as converted Paul by a miracle, but it was his pleasure to direct him to a fellow-sinner for the explicit revelation of his will.‡ The angel also might have been an instructor to Cornelius, but in order to maintain the order of the divine œconomy, the Ministry of the word was made the medium of conveying evangelical light to his soul.§ The Christian ministry is therefore the ordained means of conversion, and of subsequent establishment in every stage of the Christian life; and its necessity must continue, while there is a single sinner to be brought into the family of God, or a single grace in the heart of the saint to advance to

* Rom. x. 13—16. † Comp. 2 Chron. xv. 3. Hos. iii. 4.
‡ Acts ix. 10—17. § Ib. x. 3—6.

perfection. It is a weighty remark of Hooker's, that 'religion without the help of a spiritual ministry is unable to plant itself. Which assertion,'—says he,—' needeth no further confirmation. If it did, I could easily declare, how all things which are of God, he hath by wonderful art and wisdom soldered as it were together by the glue of mutual assistance, appointing the lowest to receive from the nearest to themselves what the influence of the highest yieldeth. And therefore the church, being the most absolute of all his works, was in reason to be also ordered with like harmony, that what he worketh might, no less in grace than in nature, be effected by hands and instruments, duly subordinated to the power of his own Spirit.'* On similar collateral views of the necessary uses of the Christian Ministry, Calvin was led to declare—'Not even is the light and heat of the sun—not even is meat and drink so necessary for the support and cherishing of life, as is the maintenance of the Ministry of the Gospel church on earth.'†

* Hooker, book v. 76,—Mosheim observes to the same purport, that 'the best system of religion must necessarily either dwindle to nothing, or be egregiously corrupted, if it is not perpetually inculcated and explained by a regular and standing Ministry.'—Ecc. Hist. Cent. i. part. ii. chap. ii.

† Calv. Instit. lib. iv. ch. iii. 3.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRIALS AND DIFFICULTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

Our Lord's parabolical declaration on the importance of a previous counting the cost of our work,* perhaps applies no where with stricter accuracy than to the Christian Ministry. The temptation to draw back from the work acquires strong force from the want of serious and prayerful calculations upon its painful exercises. Not indeed that any previous contemplation can realize the full apprehension of ministerial difficulty. The difference between contemplation and action is nearly that of a spectator of the field of battle and the combatant in the conflict. General notions of a deeply serious and intelligent character may be attained; but much will be left that can only be supplied by experience—much that will tend to illustrate the importance of the exhortation once given by a veteran to a young soldier—'Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Thou therefore endure hardness, *as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*† Indeed the difficulties connected with the due discharge of this work would be abundantly sufficient to deter any considerate conscientious mind from undertaking it with any view to temporal ease and comfort, especially while there are so many other

* Luke xiv. 28—30. Erasmus justly laments the evil resulting from this inconsideration—'Verum ad conciones sacras admittuntur, interdum etiam assiliunt, adolescentes, leves, indocti, quasi nihil fit facilius, quam apud populum exponere Divinam scripturam, et abunde sufficiat perfricuisse faciem, et abstersa pudore linguam volvere. Hoc malum ex eo fonte manat, *quod non perpenditur*, quid sit ecclesiastici concionatoris tum dignitas, tum difficultas, tum utilitas.' † 2 Tim. ii. 1—3.

tracts in life, which offer a far larger promise of indulgence. It is the work, to which most especially is linked the daily cross. Daily and sometimes overwhelming trials must be anticipated as inseparably connected with the work, and arising from these three sources—*the professing church*, *the world* and *ourselves*.

Our *responsible relation to the professing church* is associated with difficulties of no ordinary magnitude. Much may be learned on this subject from the deep views which the apostolical Eliot entertained of this work. 'He looked upon the conduct of a church,' as his biographer (Cotton Mather) informs us, 'as a thing attended with so many difficulties, temptations, and humiliations, as that nothing but a call from the Son of God could have encouraged him unto the susception of it. He saw that flesh and blood would find it no very pleasant thing to be obliged unto the oversight of a number, that by a solemn covenant should be listed among the volunteers of the Lord Jesus Christ;* that it was no easy thing to feed the souls of such a people, and of the children and the neighbours, which were to be brought into the same sheep-fold with them; to bear their manners with all patience, not being by any of their infirmities discouraged from teaching of them, and from watching and praying over them; to value them highly as the flock which God purchased with his own blood, notwithstanding all their miscarriages, and in all to examine the rule of scripture for the warrant of whatever shall be done, and to remember the day of judgment, wherein an account must be given of all that has been done. It was herewithal his opinion (as the great Owen expresses it)

* Alluding to the congregational form of church government and union, which was most prevalent in America in Eliot's time.

that notwithstanding all the countenance that is given to any church by the public magistracy, yet whilst we are in this world, those who will faithfully discharge their duty as Ministers of the gospel shall have need to be prepared for sufferings; and it was in a sense of these things that he gave himself up to the sacred Ministry.'* It scarcely needs to be remarked, what dexterity of application, diligence of labour, "discerning of spirit,"† how large a portion of "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," of his yearning compassion, and persevering self-devotedness is required for thus owning Christ. If the recollection of the church of God—of the Master whom we serve be not ever present to our mind, as the constraining motive and the upholding prop of our exertions, we must indeed sink in despondency.

Perhaps, however, the heaviest weight of ministerial responsibility is found in the awful apprehension of becoming in the end an occasion of aggravated condemnation to our people. 'Since I was ordained,' says Mr. Brown, of Haddington, 'I know not how often it hath been heavy to my heart to think how much this scripture (Isa. vi. 9, 10) hath been fulfilled in my ministry. Frequently I have had an anxious desire to be removed by death from becoming a plague to my poor congregation. Often, however, I have tasken myself, and have considered this wish as my folly, and begged of the Lord, that, if it was not for his glory to remove me by death, he would make me

* Mather's Magnalia—History of New England, book iii. pp. 183, 184.

† Nunc si reputemus in eodem populo, quanta sit varietas sexuum, ætatum, conditionis, ingeniorum, opinionum, vitæ, institutionis, consuetudinis, quantâ oportet esse præditum prudentiâ ecclesiastem, cui sit temperanda oratio.—Erasmi Ecclesiastes, p. 36.

successful in my work.'* How affecting is the thought, that our Ministry hardens and kills, as well as softens and quickens; that we are set, like our Divine Master, "for the fall and rising again of many in Israel." To the one we are "the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life." It was the recollection of this fearful responsibility, that forced from the Apostle the exclamation, (and what serious Christian Minister but sympathizes in the burden?) "Who is sufficient for these things?"† Who that has not realized the terrors of hell, and the glories of heaven, can be duly furnished for a work so deeply connected with the eternal world?

Then there are the *difficulties with the world*, from which unfaithfulness to our Master furnishes the only "way of escape." The subject-matter of our commission is not speculation, such as furnishes food for intellectual interest or disputation: it is truth, that comes into immediate contact with latent and deep-rooted prejudices. The strongest feelings of a proud and corrupted nature are brought into constant play against us and our unwelcome tale; so that we "become the enemy," instead of the friend, of our fellow-sinners, because we tell them the truth.‡ The sacrifices which we call them to make of the cherished objects of misplaced affections; the exhibition which we set before them of heavenly pleasures, (which, though far nobler in their character, and more permanent in their enjoyment, are most distasteful to the

* Brown's Life and Remains, p. 18.

† Luke ii. 34. 2 Cor. ii. 16.—Luther entered deeply into the feelings of the Apostle when he said, 'Etsi jam senex, et in concionando exercitus sum, tamen timeo, quoties suggestum conscendo.'

‡ Gal. iv. 16.

natural mind,) the certain prospects of the endurance of reproach in the service of the Gospel—these are component parts of our commission, which even from the voice of the most alluring charmer, excite the enmity of the carnal mind to our message, and to the messenger for his work's sake.* Does our personal experience furnish us with no recollections of the mighty influence of this innate indisposition to the Gospel, and of the peculiar wisdom, patience, and faithfulness needed for the work of its subjugation?

Sometimes, however, the difficulties from the world are of a different character. Some of us, from adventitious accomplishments, may be to the world "as a lovely song of one that playeth well upon an instrument." The enmity of the world, though not radically subdued, may be restrained, and even clothed with much of outward courtesy. The difficulty of faithfulness is much aggravated by these circumstances. To meet it with gentleness, and yet to detect and uncover the evil, requires a rare combination of firmness, wisdom, and consideration. To risk the almost certain consequence of a change of feeling towards us, requires the exercise of much prayer and faith. The kindness of the world is far more formidable than its enmity. Many, who would have been ready to stem the torrent of its opposition, have yielded with compromising indulgence to its paralyzing kindness.

These difficulties however, arising from exterior sources, great as they confessedly are, will bear no comparison with others that yet remain to be mentioned;—those that derive their origin and power

* Rom. viii. 7. John iii. 19, 20, with 1 Kings xxii. 8. Prædicare nihil aliud est, quam derivare in se furorem mundi. Luther.

from ourselves. "When a Minister, deeply impressed with the important difficulty of his work, looks into his own heart, to explore the resources with which he is furnished for so difficult a service, there, alas! he meets with little that does not serve to increase his sense of weakness, and to confirm his fears. For it must be remembered, that he is a man of like passions with his flock, inheriting a body of corruption;—that he is perhaps deficient in ability—perhaps unfortunate in the natural constitution of his mind—that at all events he has to struggle with infirmities, is exposed to temptations, has more to accomplish than others, as well as greater difficulties to surmount; and that, whilst more will be expected from him, in himself he may have no resources above those of his congregation."*

The spiritual character of our employment no more protects us from the excitement of internal corruption—the unfavourable influence of external associations—or the restless and subtle activity of the tempter, than occupations of a character wholly secular. Indeed, many circumstances connected with the Ministry have a peculiar tendency to excite the rising of corruption. Our office obliges us to labour, when our hearts are in a cold and languid state. Hence the danger, lest the powerful energy of the word should be weakened in its application to ourselves, lest we should gradually lose our relish for our work, excuse ourselves from its self-denying exercises, and sink into heartless despondency. A course of opposition also to our message, if it be not met in the spirit of meekness, will stir up a spirit not of the Gospel. Popularity is yet more

* Venn's Sermons, vol. i. p. 9.

dangerous. Few have escaped its influence unhurt; and that only by such exercises of painful conflict as have shewn their deliverances from this fiery trial to be nearly miraculous. Favourable symptoms of success, unless tempered with personal abasement and habitual watchfulness, exhibit the baneful principle of self-confidence. The want of these tokens, on the other hand, is too often accompanied with impatience, fretfulness, or despondency: so that, assaulted as we are at the extreme points, and from opposite directions, we need "the armour of righteousness on the right-hand and on the left." The following extract from the diary of a late excellent Minister, will give a graphical delineation of these exercises, familiar to many of us in the private walk of Ministerial experience. 'I almost constantly find the following temptations, the one or the other, assaulting me in the discharge of my office as a Minister. 1st. If I think that I am unsuccessful, I am in danger, through an unbelieving despondency, of being discouraged, of becoming remiss, and cold, and more indifferent respecting the success of my Ministry. Though this should have a quite contrary effect, yet this is the use which the devil and my own corruptions try to make of it. 2dly. If I am, or think I am, successful, this also hath a tendency to take me off my guard, and to make me less careful in watching against sin, and in mortifying universally its whole body. Spiritual pride, I suppose, comes in through my success and applause, by drawing a favourable comparison between me and others, as if I were better than they. And in proportion to my want of constant thoughts of my own vileness in the sight of God, and to the good opinion I have of myself, is always my remissness, and

want of vigilance and exertion to press forward. I see now the wisdom of the caution which the Apostle gives to Timothy, not to admit a novice, one who hath but little experience of the workings and deceit of sin, and hath made but little progress in the ways of God —not to admit such into the office of the Ministry, "lest he should be lifted up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil." The Apostle himself was not without some danger from this quarter, 2 Cor. xii. Considering the greatness of my danger, how should I "work out my salvation with fear and trembling!" None but the Lord can keep me.'*

Perhaps many of us may have entered upon this work with no other anticipation of its difficulties beyond the conscientious discharge of its official duties. And it is this want of acquaintance with the real difficulties connected with every part of the function, that, by exciting self-confidence, is one main cause of its unfruitfulness. None of us will find this "pleasure of the Lord to prosper in our hands," except every effort is grounded upon the practical conviction that no strength but the arm

* Life of Rev. T. Charles, of Bala, pp. 133, 134. From the diary of Mr. Shepard, of New-England, author of several searching treatises upon experimental divinity, a parallel to the above is extracted, as marking the uniform character of Ministerial temptation.—'I saw on the Sabbath four evils which attend me in my Ministry. First, either the devil treads me down by discouragement and shame; from the sense of the meanness of what I have provided in private meditations. Or, secondly, carelessness possesses me; arising because I have done well, and been enlarged, and been resp cted formerly; hence it is not such great matter, though I be not always alike. Thirdly, infirmities and weakness, as want of light, want of life, want of a spirit of power to deliver what I am affected with for Christ; and hence I saw many souls not set forward, nor God felt in my Ministry. Fourthly, want of success, when I have done my best.' Math. New-England, book iii. p. 91.

of Christ and Omnipotence is sufficient for the work. Many of us also realized in the prospect some taste of the delights and encouragements of the work of the Lord, and in all the spring and freshness of youth calculated upon a steady and uninterrupted devotedness rising above all opposing obstacles. But scarcely had we passed the threshhold, before the dream of confidence passed away in the first perception of the reality of things. The chilling influence of worldly objects and the disheartening effect of unsuccessful pains, soon began to exercise us with the harrassing power of ministerial temptations. We learnt to become conversant with disappointment; our sanguine expectation of a harvest proportioned to our industry was dispelled. Our constancy and love are often put to a severe and searching trial, and with all the dignity of character and principles of encouragement that belong to our service, we are made to feel that "if a man desires the office, he desires" a toilsome and self-denying, as well as "a good work."* Quesnal observes, 'The sacred Ministry is not a state of idleness or of delight, but a holy warfare, in which there are always toils and fatigues to be endured. Whoever is not resolved courageously to maintain the interests of Jesus Christ, and to labour continually to enlarge his kingdom, is not fit for this warfare."† We must indeed work, like Nehemiah and his men, with the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other.‡ We have to build and to fight at the same time, and with incessant employment. The progress of the work would be stopped by the laying down of the trowel. The enemy would gain a temporary advantage by the sheathing of the sword. Nothing therefore

* 1 Tim. iii. 1. † Quesnel on 1 Tim. i. 18. ‡ Neh. iv. 17.

remains but to maintain the posture of resistance in dependence upon him who is our wise Master-builder, and the Captain of our salvation—waiting for our rest, our crown, our home. Not indeed that we have any reason to complain of a dispensation, so obviously fraught with important blessings to our own souls, and subservient to the best ends of the Ministry. The discipline of the cross in some of its varied forms, is most needful to repress the over-weaning confidence of presumption, to establish the habit of simple dependence on the Divine promises, to prove the power of faith, the privileges of prayer, and the heavenly support of the word of God, and to furnish us with the tongue of the learned, that from our own experience of the power of temptation and the difficulties of the Christian warfare we "should know how," after our Master's example, "to speak a word in season to him that is weary."* Had the Lord *fully* shewn us these difficulties before we entered upon the work, we should probably have shrunk back. But in exhibiting them in clear prospect before us, he links them in connection with the promises of Divine aid—"As thy day, so shall thy strength be."† No reasonable ground remains therefore for despondency. In the exercise of a simple and dependent spirit we may say to the mountain of difficulty—"Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."‡ Discouragements, properly sustained and carefully improved, will become the most fruitful sources of eventual encouragement in the Christian Ministry, and love to our work bears us on in the midst of and above all our difficulties.§

* Isa. l. 4 † Deut. xxxiii. 25. ‡ Zech. iv. 6.

§ 'Magnum opus omnino et arduum conamur: sed nihil difficile amanti puto.' Cicero.

CHAPTER V.

THE COMFORTS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

It is of the utmost importance that we should comprehend within our view the whole compass of the Christian Ministry. The view of one side only of the prospect, which ever side that may be, must necessarily give an imperfect and inaccurate representation. Painful and habitual experience reminds us that it is a work of constant service and anxiety, and that we should be with our people "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."* The opposition of the world—the inconstancy of the wavering—the inconsistency of the mere professor—the difficulties that beset the paths of the enquirer—and our frequent disappointments with the hopeful—with the recollection of what we are—what we ought to be—and what we ought to do—all this acts with the subtle and mighty power of temptation upon the weakness and depravity of the heart. Did we carry on "the warfare at our own charges,"† there is but little doubt that "Satan would get advantage of us." Often circumstances and feelings sympathize with those of the Apostle, "we were prest out of measure above strength."‡ But "what contradictions" meet in our work! It is indeed sorrow—but a sorrow full of joy."§ There are indeed "temptations that take us, besides such as are common to man." We have

* 1 Cor. ii. 3. † 1 Cor. ix. 7. ‡ 2 Cor. i. 8.
§ See an exquisite hymn on Ministerial Experience in the Olney Collection, Book ii. 26.

a painful pre-eminence above our fellow Christians in the honour of bearing a double share of "the burden and heat of the day." But if "the sufferings of Christ abound in us," it is equally true that "our consolation also aboundeth by Christ."*

The grounds of support and encouragement are fully commensurate with the momentous difficulty of the work; which is not to be measured by the feeble resources of human agency, but by the Almighty power of the Spirit of God.† Did we depend for ministerial success upon the energy of mere moral suasion, we should cry out in the prostration, not of conscious helplessness, but of heartless despondency —"Who is sufficient for these things!" But the recollection that our ministration is that "of the New Testament; not of the letter, but *of the Spirit*," sustains us under all apprehended oppositions and difficulties, with most cheering prospects of success.‡ "The life-giving Spirit" employs our ministry as the vehicle of conveying his Divine influence "to open the blind eyes," and to quicken the spiritually dead. And to be enabled, and excited, by his omnipotent grace; to have his Divine seal to our work, in the conversion and edification of sinners; to be thus the

* 2 Cor. i. 5.

† What a source of encouragement is opened in such a spirit as that of Witsius, on entering upon the duties of his Professorship. 'Quidni ergo jucundissima mihi illa Domini verba applicem, quibus servum suum Josuam quondam affatus est. 'Nonne ego precepi tibi? Confirmare igitur et fortis esto; quia tecum est Dominus Deus tuus quocunque iveris.' Licet infirmitatis me meæ conscientia anxium reddat, reficit tamen Divinæ gratiæ, nunquam suos deserentis, ad sustentandum prompta facilitas—Illius autem gratiæ, cui lubitum est virtutem suam in infirmitate confirmare, quæque abjectissimis sæpe et rei gerendæ minime idoneis instrumentis utitur, ut totius operis gloria in solidum ac illibata sibi remaneat. Oratio De Vero Theologo. Misc. Sacra, ii. 851, 852.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

honoured instrument of communicating the life of God, with all its attendant privileges, to the soul of man; cannot but bring with it a reflex delight of the most exalted character.* This is indeed to find our wages in our work, independent of any "respect to the recompense of the reward."

"Times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" are also realized, amidst seasons of toil and discouragement, in marking the influence of the blessed fruits of the ministry, connected with the honour of the Redeemer's name, in the many instances where the once-despised Saviour has been found "chiefest among ten thousand," and where "the beauty of holiness" has been stamped upon a profession once bearing a widely different superscription. The subsequent walk also of this renewed people in the faith, hope, and love of the Gospel, forms our ground of unceasing thanksgiving to God, our chief joy, and the very life of our life. "We have no greater joy, than to hear that our children walk in truth."† We turn to them in the expression of parental anxiety and delight —"Now we live, *if ye stand fast in the Lord.*"‡

* 'I will remind you,' says Cotton Mather, 'that one of the greatest personages (an Archbishop and a Lord-Keeper) in the English nation once uttered this memorable speech. 'I have passed through many places of honour and trust both in Church and State, more than any of my order in England, for seventy years before: but were I assured that by my preaching I had converted but one soul unto God, I should herein take more comfort than in all the honours and offices that have ever been bestowed upon me.' You are entering upon a work that will keep you continually in the way of this incomparable satisfaction; and I hope that you will rejoice in the way of bearing testimonies for God more than in all riches; and that the saving, or enlightening and edifying of our soul at any time will be a matter of more joy unto you, than if all the wealth of Ophir should flow in upon you.' Mather's Student and Pastor, pp. 159, 160.

† 2 John 4. ‡ 1 Thess. iii. 7—9.

We may mention also, as a *subordinate source* of comfort and encouragement in our work, the *share and interest* we possess in the affectionate sympathies of a beloved people. Here we find the full compensation for the scorn of an ungodly world, and the secret spring of many an hour of support and enjoyment, by which we are carried forward in our painful course. Many of our people are sufficiently spiritual and intelligent to be not wholly unacquainted with our experience. They well know that our path is strewn with snares, and our hearts keenly wounded with sorrow and temptation. Christian sympathy will engage them to "communicate with our affliction." A sense of duty, obligation, and privilege will combine to call forth their exertions, and to direct their conduct so as carefully to remove from us, as far as possible, all just grounds of complaint, or occasions of grief; and to make our labours for their sakes, and in their services, consoling to our own souls.* Our debt of obligation to the secret expressions of their love at the throne of grace is reserved among the discoveries of the great day, to add dignity and emphasis to the acknowledgment now made "in part," then to be more fully proclaimed, that "we are their rejoicing, even as they also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus."†

One other comfort and encouragement of the ministry, of a more individual character, deserves to be

* This mutual relation between the Pastor and the people is beautifully expressed by Quesnel. 'The latter,' says he, 'ought to alleviate the troubles which attend the pastoral function, by a filial respect, "obedience, and fear." The former ought to make a suitable return on all occasions by his care, and continually to cherish the flock by fresh testimonies of satisfaction, joy, and tenderness. On 2 Cor. vii. 15, 16. Also on 2 Cor. ii. 3. Phil. ii. 26.

† 2 Cor. i. 14.

mentioned—*the special advantage that it affords for the cultivation of personal religion.** We shall afterwards, indeed, be led to remark upon the peculiar hindrances arising from this source.† It must, however, be remembered that these are the workings of temptation acting upon a corrupt nature; while the direct tendency of a spiritual function must be the advancement of spiritual religion in the heart. There is something in the most circumspect occupation in the cares and business of life, that deadens the soul to the contemplation of heavenly things: and it is only by special exercises of watchfulness and prayer that the Christian is enabled in any measure to maintain his elevation upon "eagle's wings," while too often he is brought to the ground with the humbling confession —"My soul cleaveth unto the dust."‡ Often did the heavenly Psalmist feel the cares of the kingdom to be engrossing time and thought and contemplation that he would most thankfully have devoted to the immediate service and enjoyment of his God; and often was he almost ready to envy the Ministers of the sanctuary their peculiar privilege of a nearer approach to their God, and a constant abidance in his work.§ And where is the exercised Christian who does not

* See this clearly illustrated by Bishop Burnet—Pastoral Care, ch. viii. Mr. Boston, the well known author of 'The Fourfold State,' dates his earliest thoughts and desires of the ministry from the consideration—'because of all men ministers were most taken up about spiritual things.' 'Is it not, brethren, our unspeakable advantage, beyond all the gainful and honourable employments of the world, that the whole work of our particular calling is a kind of living in heaven; and besides its tendency to the saving of the souls of others, is all along so proper and adapted to the purifying and saving of our own?' Leighton's Letter to the Clergy of Dumblane. Compare also his works, ii. 452.

† Part iii. ch. viii. ‡ Psalm cxix. 25. with Isa. xl. 31.

§ Compare Psalm lxv. 4, lxxxiv. 4.

mourn over the necessary secularities of his calling, as abridging him of much time, that might have been devoted to spiritual enjoyments, and distracting even those seasons which, by the active habit of self-denial, he is enabled to consecrate to the interests of his soul? It is so difficult to be *employed* without being "*entangled* with the affairs of this life;"* there are so many weeds of a worldly growth and of rank luxuriance, "choking the word," when it has given fair promise of fruit, and is even advancing "to perfection,"† that the comparative freedom from these embarrassing hindrances is not among the least of the privileges of the Christian Ministry. Besides, the devotion of time, the concentration of attention, and the improvement of talents and opportunities—all applied to that employment, which is the present and eternal rest of the soul —must, when pursued with simplicity of purpose, be influential in forming and maturing the spiritual character for a more abundant supply of heavenly communications, and far more extensive usefulness in the Church of God.

Add to this the *confirmation* which is *afforded to our own faith* by the *daily routine* of *a spiritual ministration.* The palpable display of the blindness and enmity of the natural man—the necessity of a radical change of heart and habit—the means by which this change is effected—its beneficial influence upon the whole character—its sustaining efficacy, as manifested in the daily exhibition of "the patience and faith of the saints"—all meet us on every side in our closer and more familiar survey of man; strengthening our personal faith in the revelation of Scripture, and enabling

* 2 Tim. ii. 4. † Luke viii. 14.

us to set our seal with stronger confidence, that in our official testimony "we have not followed cunningly devised fables."*

But it is the *prospect of eternity* that consummates the view of the encouragements of the Christian Ministry. Then indeed will be manifested a most glorious assurance of the Divine aphorism—"He that winneth souls is wise"—when "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."† —Thus the recompense of the Christian Minister, though only the instrument of the Divine purpose, and the organ of Almighty agency, is as rich and full, as if the honour and glory of the work were his own. What clearer proof is needed, that the rewards of the Gospel dispensations are of "grace and not of debt"—the indulgence of the free mercy of God—the unfolding of the "unsearchable riches" of his grace—wholly irrespective of man's desert—which, were its claims insisted upon, would, instead of exalting him to the favour of his God, cover him with "shame and everlasting contempt." It may be granted, therefore, that we are called to difficult and costly service. Yet have we abundant cause to be satisfied with it, from the sustaining support and consolation provided for its emergencies. All, indeed, may be considered to be included in the single promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." The

* 2 Pet. i. 16.—See this point admirably drawn out in a somewhat varied view in a Visitation Sermon, preached at Henley, by Rev. J. B. Sumner, (now Lord Bishop of Chester) pp. 18—21, and subsequently published as one of four interesting sermons on the Christian Ministry.

† Prov. xi. 25. Dan. xii. 3. For a magnificent view of the glory of the Ministerial crown, see Hall's Sermon on the Discouragements and Supports &c. pp. 51—53.

officers he employs, in every age, are entitled to this treasure, as well as those of the first age.—Keep your mind believingly attentive to this "*always*"—*Lo, I am with you*, to qualify and succeed you in whatever work I call you to. "*Lo, I am with you*," to comfort you by my presence and Spirit, when your hearts are grieved." "*Lo I am with you*," to defend and strengthen you in trials, though all men forsake you. While he stands with you, there can be no just cause of fear or faintness. You need no other encouragement. This you shall never want, if you continue faithful: and hereupon you may conclude, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom."*

Thus is every view of the Christian Ministry replete with quickening and encouraging motives to increased exertion and devotedness.† In the midst of many painful exercises of faith and patience, we can "thank God and take courage." None, it is presumed, who have devoted themselves in simplicity to the work, will hesitate in subscribing to Mr. Scott's testimony—'With all my discouragements and sinful despondency, in my better moments, I can think of no work worth doing compared with this. Had I a thousand lives, I would willingly spend them in it: and had I as many sons, I should gladly devote them to it."‡

* D. Williams on the Ministerial Office, 1708. pp. 43, 44.

† Ab humi repentibus curis erigat animum tuum considerata functionis dignitas: a prevaricatione deterreret delegantis dignitas: Socordiam excludat muneris difficultas. Industriam ac vigilantiam exstimulat præmii magnitudo, quod non ab hominibus, sed a Deo erit expectandum. Erasm. Eccles. p. 193.

‡ Scott's Life, pp. 343, 344.

CHAPTER VI.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

MR. NEWTON'S important remark may, we conceive, be safely considered as an axiom.—'None but he who made the world can make a Minister of the Gospel.' He thus proceeds to *illustrate* his position (for it cannot be thought to need any *proof*)—'If a young man has capacity, culture and application may make him a scholar, a philosopher, or an orator; but a true Minister must have certain principles, motives, feelings, and aims, which no industry or endeavours of men can either acquire or communicate. They must be given from above, or they cannot be received.'*

These principles wrought out and set forth in their practical influence and application, will furnish a complete view of the necessary qualifications for the Christian Ministry. There is something so fearfully responsible in entering upon this work, either wholly unqualified, or with incompetent capabilities, that the man can scarcely be considered to feel any serious concern for his own soul, for the immortal interests of his fellow-sinners, or for the welfare of the Church of God, whose mind has not been more or less severely exercised upon the ground of personal unfitness. Even the most "able Minister of the New Testament" that the Church has ever seen, was deeply penetrated, and indeed well-nigh overwhelmed,† with the sense of the "necessity laid upon him." And

* Newton's Works, Vol. v. 62. † 2 Cor. ii. 16.

who are we then, that we should follow in the work with qualifications far inferior, and yet with apprehensions of its obligations less accurate and constraining? It is however most important in our consideration of this subject neither to fall short of the Scriptural standard of Ministerial Qualification, nor to insist upon anything as indispensable, independent of that standard. There is much that may be desirable, that can scarcely be deemed essential. We must also admit the distinction between such a deficiency as incapacitates for the work, and a comparative measure of unfitness, as contrasted with Ministers of acknowledged eminence.--"There are also diversities of gifts," and "differences of administration" of the same gifts, under "the same Spirit and the same Lord."* But under all circumstances we may expect the Divine call to this sacred office to be evidenced by a supply of competent qualifications for its discharge.

We are exhorted to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."† And here indeed we witness a most harmonious combination of seemingly opposite characteristics. The Ministry of our Lord was marked with the dignity of God and the sympathy of a man and a brother—with the authority of the commissioned delegate of his Father's will, and yet with the humility of a servant, who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."‡ If "he spake as one having authority," yet were they "gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth," tempered with "the meekness of wisdom" and "the gentleness" of love. Indeed the contemplation of the several features of his Ministerial character furnishes the most accurate standard of our

* 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5. † Heb. iii. 1. ‡ Matt. xx. 28.

official qualifications, and most explicit directory for every exercise of our public or private Ministrations. But, lest we should despond in our infinite remove from this standard of perfection, let us mark it brought down to our own level. The Apostolic Ministry was administered by "men of like passions with ourselves," and "compassed with infirmity," and yet enabled by the grace of their Divine Master to follow closely in his steps. A rich treasure of instruction may be found in an attentive perusal of the Acts of the Apostles. The Epistles will also furnish a complete portraiture of the character, no less than a comprehensive system of the doctrines, of the Christian Ministry. The different traits of St. Paul's ministry, as they break forth in the natural flow of his writings, and the brief sketches which he occasionally intersperses, will be found to embody the main particulars of his invaluable didactic instructions to Timothy and Titus—his "own sons in the faith." Quesnel has drawn out no less than thirty-three individualities of the sacred character from a single chapter.* The mention of Epaphroditus, incidentally introduced, seems to elicit a view of some of the primary qualifications for the sacred work. Paul speaks of him as his "brother," and therefore as a sincere Christian. He marks his sympathy, diligence, and perseverance, as his "fellow-labourer"—his "endurance of hardness" as his "fellow-soldier," his tender attachment to his flock, in longing to relieve them from

* 1 Thess. ii.; and again twenty-one, from a part only of another chapter (2 Cor. vi. 1—12); ten from two verses in a third chapter (Col. i. 28, 29.) Indeed his commentary throughout exhibits a deep study of the Pastoral Office. It is needless to add, how much this consideration enhances its value with those, who desire a detailed exhibition of their duties, obligations, and encouragements.

needless anxiety on his behalf, and his high estimation of his Master's work as dearer to him than life itself.*

In taking a general view of the subject of Ministerial qualification, we might class them under the three divisions of Spiritual character—Spiritual attainments, and Spiritual gifts.

I. If the Ministry be a spiritual work, a corresponding *spiritual character* seems to be required in its administrators. It must be a most flattering delusion to suppose a fitness for the work, where there is no suitable principle, end, encouragement, or assistance; no care, concern, or expectation of success; no interest in the engagements, except as they may provide for self-gratifications. It is not therefore too much to expect of Ministers, that they should be in a peculiar sense men of God—men taught of God† —men consecrated to God by a daily surrender of their time and talents to his service—men of singleness of purpose—living in their work—living altogether but for one end; and for the promotion of this end, "moved by none of the afflictions that await them, counting not their life dear to them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Such was the Apostle Paul, the living example of his own Ministerial instructions. Such is the high character of the Christian Ministration, as this faithful servant of his Master drew it out in his Episcopal Charge to his Clergy of Ephesus,‡ which, as Mr. Baxter truly

* Phil. ii. 25—30. Some beautiful touches are given also of the character of Timothy—verses 19—22.

† It is excellently remarked by Erasmus—'Qui cupit juxta Paulum esse διδακτικος, det operam, ut prius sit Θεοδιδακτος—i. e. Divinitus edoctus.' Eccles. p. 84.

‡ Acts xx. 17—35.

observes, 'better deserveth a twelvemonth's study, than most things that young students do lay out their time in.' 'O brethren,' continues this earnest pleader for his Master's work—'write it on your study doors, or set it as your copy in capital letters, still before your eyes. Could we but well learn two or three lines of it, what preachers should we be!—Write all this upon your hearts, and it will do yourselves and the Church more good than twenty years' study of those lower things, which, though they get you greater applause in the world, yet separated from these, will make you but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.'*

It is obvious, however, that this standard of spiritual devotedness, pre-supposes in the Minister the principles of personal piety of a deep tone, experimental character, and devotional habit, such as is habitually exercised in self-denial, prominently marked by love to the Saviour, and to the souls of his fellow-sinners, and practically exhibited in a general course of a consistent and blameless† conduct. The Apostle justly

* Baxter's Reformed Pastor.

† Perhaps this might be all that Erasmus meant, when he speaks in terms however too unmeasured of the requirements of unspotted holiness for the Ministerial Office, 'In Ecclesiasta hac imprimis spectanda sunt, ut *cor habeat ab omnibus vitiis et cupiditatibus humanis mundum.* (He goes on, however, in his best style of terseness and accuracy of description.) 'Ut vitam habeat non tantum a criminibus, sed et suspicione, specieque criminum, puram, inculpatam; ut spiritum habeat adversus omnes Satanæ machinas firmum, adamantinum, inconcussum: ut mentem igneam, et ad bene merendum de omnibus flagrantem; ut animum habeat sapientem ad condiendam populi stultitiam, cor habeat prudens et oculatum; ut facile dispiciat quid silendum, quidve dicendum, et apud quos, quo tempore, quo modo, temperanda oratio Qui cum Paulo sciat mutare vocem, et omnia fieri omnibus, utcumque viderit saluti auditorum expedire Nam hunc unicum oportet esse scopum, ad quem ecclesiastes rationes suas omnes dirigat, a quo si deflecteris oculos, continuo fit, ut quo magis instructus fueris ad dicendum, eo majorem invehas perniciem in gregem Dominicam.' Erasmi Eccles.

pronounces "a novice"* to be disqualified for this holy work. The bare existence of religion in its acknowledged sincerity, provides but slender materials for this important exigency. A babe in grace and knowledge is palpably incompetent to become "a teacher of babes," much more a guide of the fathers. The school of adversity, of discipline, and of experience, can alone give the needful qualification of "the tongue of the learned." Some measure of eminence and an habitual aim towards greater eminence is indispensable for Ministerial completeness; such however as will never fail to be acquired in the diligent use of the means of Divine appointment —the word of God and prayer.

II. *Spiritual attainments* also may be considered in conjunction with a spiritual character. By these we chiefly mean an accurate and comprehensive view of the evangelical system. Admitting indeed the simplicity of the Gospel, consisting only of a few leading ideas, included often in a single verse ;‡ we

* It may be not unprofitable to compare with this, another finished portrait of the Christian minister from the pen of the admirable Vitringa. 'Quanti igitur facias fidum servum Christi, doctorem evangelii, anima rectum, gloriæ Divinæ et salutis hominum studio flagrantem; non *quærentem quæ sint hominum, sed homines;* non quæ *sua* sunt, sed quæ *Domini;* a Spiritu Sancto doctum, viarum Dei per experientiam peritum; castis purisque moribus; virtutes pietatis, modestiæ, mansuetudinis, zeli, prudentiæ, gravitatis, docentum exemplo; qui, instar lampadis impositus candelabro, omnibus, qui in domo sunt, lucem præfert; omnibus salutis suæ cupidis, tum viam salutis demonstrat, tum ipsam gratiam et salutem conditionibus evangelicis dispensat. Quoquo incedit, lux est. Quoquo se vertit, salus est. Ubi aperit, sal est. Ubique carus, venerabilis, non minus solatii aliis impertit, quam ipse sibi solatio est; post decursum vitæ ac laborem studium tandem ausurus se Domino ac Judici suo sistere cum fiducia, et libero ore, administrationis suæ reddere rationem, secundum formulam: 'Duo talenta a te accepi, Domine: totidem lucratus cum sorte tibi reddo." Pref. animadv. ad Method. Homil. † 1 Tim. iii. 6.

‡ Such as John iii. 16. or 1 Tim. i. 15.

must not however forget the depth and fulness of the Divine revelation. Though a simple and experimental acquaintance with a few elementary principles "is able to make wise unto salvation," yet the Scripture is given in its comprehensive extent for a variety of important purposes, and for this express intent, "that the man," or the Minister, "of God" (who seems to be chiefly meant) "might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* In ministerial furniture therefore is included a store of Scriptural knowledge far beyond a bare sufficiency for personal salvation. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for He is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts."† He is to be the "householder—instructed unto the kingdom of heaven—which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."‡ 'The cursory perusal of a few books,' as Dr. Owen well observes, 'is thought sufficient to make any man wise enough to be a Minister. And not a few undertake ordinarily to be teachers of others, who would scarcely be admitted as tolerable disciples in a well ordered church. But there belongeth more unto this wisdom, knowledge, and understanding than most men are aware of. Were the nature of it duly considered, and withal the necessity of it to the Ministry of the Gospel, probably some would not so rush on the work as they do, which they have no provision of ability for the performance of. It is in brief such a comprehension of the scope and end of the Scripture, of the revelation of God therein; such an acquaintance with the system of particular doctrinal truths in their

* 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. † Mal. ii. 7. ‡ Matt. xiii. 52.

rise, tendency, and use; such an habit of mind in judging of spiritual things, and comparing them one with another; such a distinct insight into the springs and course of the mystery of the love, grace, and will of God in Christ, as enables them in whom it is to declare the counsel of God, to make known the way of life, of faith, and obedience unto others, and to instruct them in their whole duty to God and man therein. This the Apostle calls his "knowledge in the mystery of Christ," which he manifested in his writings. For as the Gospel, the dispensation and declaration which is committed unto the Ministers of the Church, is "the wisdom of God in a mystery," so their principal duty is to become so wise and understanding in that mystery as that they may be able to declare it to others, without which they have no Ministry committed unto them by Jesus Christ."* The importance of an accurate and well-digested acquaintance with the system of the Gospel for the fulfilment of the grand ends of our office, to "speak unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort,"† is too obvious to be insisted upon. Without an intelligent perception of our own principles, we can never exhibit them in their true light to our people, or apply them to the successive emergencies for which they are adapted.

III. *Spiritual gifts* must be associated with spiritual attainments among the qualifications for the Ministerial work. Indeed on these depends the very being of the Ministry; which may, as in the cases of Balaam and Judas, and the Jewish High Priests, exist without a spiritual character, but not without spiritual gifts.

* Owen's Pneumatologia. † 1 Cor. xiv. 3.

Without these the highest spiritual attainments might be serviceable to their possessors, but they could not become the public property or the public benefit of the Church of God. There must be a spiritual ability to communicate to others what has been imparted to us—and to enforce it with all the methods of heavenly persuasion. If we are thoroughly conversant with the Epistles of St. Paul, we shall have little difficulty in observing that they were written, as his brother apostle reminds us, "according to the wisdom given unto him."* We shall be astonished at the admirable skill, with which he adapts his instruction to an almost infinite diversity of persons, occasions, and circumstances—to their strength, or feebleness—their progress or decay—their mistaken or wilful abuses—their different capacities, advantages or disadvantages—with what exquisite address he "changes his voice," in meekness or in vehemence—in tenderness or in sharpness—in reproof or in expostulation—thus in his administration, as in his personal conduct, "becoming all things to all men, if that by any means he might save some."† This spiritual wisdom is the life and adorning of the Christian Ministry, and is as important for the building up and maintaining the building of the Church of God, as was the wisdom imparted to Bezaleel and Aholiab for the raising of the Levitical tabernacle.‡ It is thus that we "approve ourselves unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."§ It is thus only that as "Stewards of the mysteries, and rulers over the household"‖

* 2 Pet. iii. 15.
† See the close of quotation from Erasmus given above.
‡ Exod. xxxv. 30—35. § 2 Tim. ii. 15.
‖ 1 Cor. iv. 1, Luke xii. 42.

of God, we are enabled to distribute the stores of provision from the store-house of Scripture to every member of the household, suited to their several wants, occasions, and services, and answering to their Master's wise and gracious will. A competent measure of sound judgment is needed in taking account of their individual state—the strength and exercise of their spiritual capacities—the kind of food which they severally require for the nourishment of the Divine life, according to their infantine, growing, or adult state—their special hindrances or advantages—their advance, apparently stationary condition, or visible decay in the ways of God. The treatment of these several individualities demands a deep and accurate acquaintance with the methods of the work of Divine grace, in order to administer a seasonable and effective distribution of the word. The apostle marks also the gift of utterance"* as a spiritual endowment of important influence upon the dispensation of the word, enabling us to address our people after his own manner with "opened mouth" and "enlarged heart,"† to "speak as the oracles of God," in mode as well as in matter, in "sound speech" as well as "sound doctrine;"‡ delivering our testimony with authority and holy confidence, "not as the word of man, but in truth the word of God—" in a manner suitable to the dignity of the pulpit, and yet plain to the weakest capacity. The natural powers of clear thinking and arrangement of matter—of aptitude of expression, and of familiar and appropriate illustration, are the very soul of composition, and are often used as sanctified instruments of conveying the life-giving power of the

* Eph. vi. 19. † 2 Cor. vi. 11.
‡ Tit. ii. 1, 7, 8.

Gospel, with increasing acceptance and application. Not, however, that any of these abilities are communicated by an extraordinary or sudden afflatus, or that they necessarily in all cases accompany in an equal measure the efforts of diligence.* The diligence of faith will never be without its present encouragement and recompense in the growth, increase, and improvement of Ministerial gifts. Yet we must not entrench upon the exercise of the Divine sovereignty, remembering that "all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."†

'It is not to be supposed,' therefore, to use the words of a sensible writer, 'that such an office can be easily filled. It demands not merely some but many, nay, all excellencies, in happy combination. A person may, in a general way, be said to be qualified for the Ministry, who has talents for preaching, though not fitted for profitable private intercourse, or the affairs of Church Government. But this is evidently not a complete adaptation to the work. It is, on the contrary, a very imperfect one, and one with which no man should be content. For all the aspects of Ministerial labour are, if not equally, yet highly important; every one of them far too important to be

* Bishop Sanderson observes—'It was Simon Magus's error to think that the gifts of God might be purchased with money; and it has a spice of his sin, and so may go for a kind of simony, to think that spiritual gifts may be purchased with labour. You may rise up early and go to bed late, and study hard, and read much, and devour the marrow of the best authors; and when you have done all, unless God give a blessing to your endeavours, be as lean and meagre in regard of true and useful learning, as Pharaoh's lean kine, were, after they had eaten the fat ones. It is God, that both ministereth the seed to the sower, and multiplieth the seed sown: the principal and the increase are both his.'

† 1 Cor. xii. 11.

trifled with. The right performance of each affords facilities for the rest, and gives additional beauty and efficacy to all. To be fit for only one department, cannot but greatly impede our activity, and diminish our success. To fill the ministerial office with a degree of satisfaction and benefit commensurate with its capabilities, or with the desire of a heart awake to its importance, we must be all that it demands—men of God, perfect, completely furnished to every good work.'*

CHAPTER VII.

PREPARATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

We have already partially seen that the weight and importance of Ministerial responsibilities render the work apparently more fitting to the shoulders of angels than of men.† It is therefore a matter of the deepest regret, that there should be found those who will rush

* Hinton on Completeness of Ministerial Qualification, pp. 11, 12. 'It will not fail to be objected,' remarks Mr. Ostervald, 'that 'If none were to be admitted into holy orders, except those who are possessed of every necessary qualification, there could not possibly be procured a sufficient number of Pastors for the supply of our Churches.' To which I answer, that a small number of chosen Pastors is preferable to a multitude of unqualified teachers. At all hazards we must adhere to the command of God, and leave the event to Providence. But in reality the dearth of pastors is not so generally to be apprehended. To reject those candidates for holy orders, whose labours in the Church would be wholly fruitless, is undoubtedly a work of piety. Others on the contrary, who are qualified to fulfil the duties of the sacred office, would take encouragement from this exactness and severity, and the Ministry would every day be rendered more respectable in the world.' Ostervald on Sources of Corruption.

† Onus Angelicus humeris formidandum. Augustine.

upon it, equally unquallified for its duties, and unimpressed with its obligations. 'Fools will rush in where angels fear to tread.'* The influence of selfish or secular motives is awfully successful in blinding the conscience to the sense of the present necessity, and to the anticipation of the day of account; and thus talents are either hid in the earth, or prostituted for the service of another master. On the other hand, young men of ardent feelings and promising talents, but with unfurnished minds, are thrust forward by the persuasion of injudicious friends, or by the excitement of some momentary bias, into the sacred office. The Church of God has severely suffered from this woeful inconsideration, and the victims of this ill-directed impetus have felt to their cost the bitter fruits in the disappointment of their own Ministry, and the want of establishment and support in their own souls. In other cases, however, an interval abundantly sufficient has been allotted for Ministerial preparation with no better success. The precious time for gathering in the store has been either wasted in feebleness and sloth, or it has been more actively misapplied in studies, which have no direct tendency to form a solid, judicious, and experimental Ministry; so that with every advantage of deliberation, but a slender stock of spiritual or intellectual furniture is ready to meet the successive and daily increasing demands. A considerate calculation of the momentous costs affords the only well-grounded hope of an efficient Ministry. Because it is then that the work will be contemplated,—not in the colouring

* Nulla ars doceri præsumitur, nisi intenta prius meditatione discitur. Ab imperitis ergo pastoribus magisterium pastorale suscipitur in magna temeritate, quoniam ars est artium regimen animarum. Greg. de Cura Pastor. cap. 1.

of a self-indulgent anticipation, but in its true Scriptural light, as warranted by the experience of every faithful labourer,—a work not of ease, but of self-denial—not of hasty effort, but of patient endurance—not of feeling and impulse, but of faith, prayer, and determination.

The beneficial influence of a *well-improved* season of preparation may be felt throughout the course of a protracted Ministry. Time employed in storing the mind with Scripture doctrine, and the best mode of directing it to devotional and practical purposes—in habits of self-communion and converse with God, and in the exercise of active godliness, will turn to most profitable account. A few suggestions therefore will now be offered on Ministerial preparation under the divisions of Habits of General Study—The Special Study of the Scriptures—Habits of Prayer—and Employment in every thing relating to the welfare of souls.

SECTION I.

HABITS OF GENERAL STUDY.

"GIVE attendance to reading,"* is the Scripture rule for Ministerial study. It is obviously of a general character, nor is there any reason for restricting its application to the Sacred volume. "Paul the aged" in sending for his "books and parchments,"† which, it may be presumed, he wanted for perusal, thus exemplified the comprehensive extent of his own rule. Indeed experience amply warrants the assertion, that the Church of God is built up by the Ministry of the

* 1 Tim. iv. 13. † 2 Tim. iv. 13.

pen as well as of the mouth, and that in both ways "the manifestation of the Spirit is given unto every one *to profit withal.*"* It is not to be supposed, that God would suffer the labours of his servants, in communicating the results of exercised, deep, and devotional study, to be in vain. The experience of men of God, like that of diligent travellers, is a public benefit; and the fruit of it in successive ages is preserved as a most valuable store of important knowledge to the Church.

The Apostle's rule just referred to, may again be explained by his own practice—to embrace the wide field of *General study.*† We occasionally mark in his writings the introduction of heathen aphorisms in the illustration or application of sacred truth,'‡ which he surely never would have countenanced, had he apprehended that the purity of the Christian system of instruction would necessarily suffer from an intermixture of human learning. Stephen mentions it to

* 1 Cor. xii. 7.

† Thus Mr. Scott explains it, as referring 'to the study of the Scriptures, or of *any other books which could add to his fund of profitable knowledge.*' In an earlier period of life, he candidly confesses that his 'notions on these subjects were too contracted.' Mature consideration, however, formed his studious life upon more enlarged principles, which he never failed strongly to inculcate upon young men under his care and influence, marking, however, at the same time, the importance of a due subordination to the main end. 'The object of all your studies,' he writes in one of his letters, 'should be, neither celebrity, advantage, nor knowledge *for its own sake*, but furniture to enable you to serve God in your generation.' Life, pp. 102, 103, 330. A minister of the present day said once to a friend, who, on calling upon him, found him reading Gibbon's History, that 'he read every thing with a particular view to his Ministry, that he collected some materials for the pulpit from books of almost every description, and that he made all his readings contribute something towards what was needful for the Sunday.' Christian Observer, Oct. 1828, p. 608.

‡ Such as Acts xvii. 28. 1 Cor. xv. 33. Titus i. 12.

the honour, not to the discredit, of the Jewish Lawgiver, that he was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."* Nor do we degrade the perfection of the Divine revelation in acknowledging our obligation to human learning. The illiterate owe a mighty debt to this quarter, for a translation of the Scripture, which otherwise would have laid by them as a dead letter in an unknown tongue. The more intelligent reader is indebted to the same source for the explanation of many of its difficulties from collateral researches, and for many powerful defences of its authority, which enable him "with meekness and fear," but yet with confidence, to "be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh him, a reason of the hope that is in him."†

At the era of the Reformation learning and religion revived together. Nor can it be doubted that the learning which Erasmus brought into the schools, notwithstanding its too great alliance with "philosophy and vain deceit,"‡ was a material assistance to Luther in his labours in the Church. We have just hinted that the Apostle Paul was evidently not destitute of the acquirements of learning, 'and,' as Dr. Buchanan has well observed, 'we are taught by his Epistles, that we may avail ourselves of every human aid to dispense the blessings of the Gospel. All these human aids, I say, are valuable gifts of God, and only cease to be blessings by the abuse of them. It is true that the Gospel may be preached with great energy by Ministers possessing very inconsiderable attainments in literature. It sometimes happens that the most successful Ministrations are conducted by men of very

* Acts vii. 22. † 1 Peter iii. 15. ‡ Col. ii. 8.

moderate acquirements. And indeed the character of the Gospel seems to require that in most cases (where the true doctrine is preached) it should give more honour to zeal and diligence than to genius and learning. But it is also true that God is pleased to make himself known by the use of means. And when the means are used in subordination to his grace, he will honour the means. Let us then honour human learning. Every branch of knowledge which a good man possesses, he may apply to some useful purpose. If he possessed the knowledge of an archangel, he might employ it all to the advantage of men and glory of God.'*

To conceive the all-sufficiency of grace to supersede the importance of general knowledge, would be to allow, that a child under the influence of grace is as fitted for the Christian Ministry, as an intelligent adult under the *same degree* of heavenly influence. If then this knowledge is not to be despised, 'then it will follow,' as President Edwards has remarked, 'that the means of obtaining it are not to be neglected, viz. study; and that this is of great use in order to a preparation for publicly instructing others. And though having the heart full of the powerful influences of the Spirit of God may at some time enable persons to speak profitably, yea, very excellently without study; yet this will not warrant us needlessly to cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple, depending upon it, that the angel of the Lord will bear us up, and keep us from dashing our foot against

* Sermon preached before the Church Missionary Society, inserted in his volume of Sermons, pp. 249—257. See some valuable remarks in Scott's continuation of Milner, vol. ii. pp. 385, 386.

a stone, when there is another way to go down, though it be not so quick.'*

May the writer be allowed to suggest, that in this view a conscientious regard to the course of university study is of far higher moment than is sometimes considered? Even where no ardency is excited in the pursuit of academical distinctions, yet the daily exercises of regularity, discipline, and self-denial, furnish an effectual safe-guard against the detrimental influence of mental, and possibly also religious, dissipation. It were much to be wished, that the prescribed course had a more direct reference to the Christian Ministry. But whatever disappointment may be felt in the theological department of the system, yet much store is laid in of important principles of knowledge—the studious habit is formed—and a tone of mind is acquired or strengthened for the subsequent attainment of methodized, well digested, and comprehensive views.†

Professor Campbell remarks—'that whatever in respect of knowledge supplies the materials necessary for edifying, comforting, and protecting from all spiritual danger the people that may be committed to his charge, or is of use for defending the cause of his Master, must evidently be a proper study for the man who intends to enter into the holy Ministry. Again—

* Distinguishing marks of the work of a true spirit.

† Perhaps some of us in the recollection of this important era may be led to make Philip Henry's confession; and would that it might be made with equal sincerity and tenderness of spirit! 'What must needes bee done in colledge-exercise, for disputations every day in Term time, for theames and verses one a week, and for declamations; when it came to my turn, I did as others of my standing, and sometimes had prayse for it. But as for that which wee call hard study, giving myself to reading, late and early, and digesting what I read by daily serious reviews, I was too much a stranger to it.'

Whatever may enable him to make a proper application of those acquisitions in knowledge, so as to turn them to the best account for the benefit of his people, is not less requisite. To little purpose will it be to him to be possessed of the best materials, if he have not acquired the skill to use them. The former we may call the theory of the profession; the latter the practice. The first regards purely the science of theology; the second the application of that science to the purpose of the Christian pastor.'*

In this system of theology is included whatever may tend to illustrate, confirm, enforce, or recommend the doctrines of the Gospel. Dr. Dwight well points out the advantage of an acquaintance with Ecclesiastical History, as a component part of this preparatory study. 'This will teach the student,' he observes, 'the sins and virtues, the errors and sound doctrines, the prosperous and adverse circumstances, which have existed in the church in its various ages; together with the causes by which they have been produced. Generally he will derive from this source the same advantages, in the ecclesiastical sense, which the statesman derives in a political sense, from civil history. He will learn what the church has been; why it has thus been; and how in many respects it may be rendered better and happier.'† It need only be added that Mosheim will furnish the requisite information respecting the visible church, and Milner respecting the real church. A comparison of these two works in the prominent events of successive eras will open a field of most enlarged and interesting, but too often pain-

* Lectures on Pulpit Eloquence—Lecture I.
† Dwight's System of Theology, vol. v. p. 227.

ful, contemplation. A work that combines the two in a comprehensive grasp, and with impartial but decided Christian views, remains yet to be supplied to the church.

The importance of an intelligent acquaintance with the grounds of his own church, seems to direct the candidate for the Ministry in the Establishment, to a thoughtful study of Hooker's incomparable work. The power with which he has set forth the apostolical foundation of our church, and its careful conformity to the Scriptural model, is at once above all praise, and proof against all attack. Nothing has since been added materially to strengthen the ground on which he has fixed her—nothing indeed is needed. But the characteristic of the work—that which gives to it its peculiar dignity and interest, and in which it differs from many similar works of acknowledged ability—is *its holiness*. It not only exhibits the exquisite symmetry of the outward superstructure, but it views the interior of the temple with the eye of a man of God. The work is cast into the mould of the subject matter. It marks the genuine spiritual character of the church in its requirements and its privileges, and displays the "beauty of holiness" stamped upon the services of her sanctuary. One knows not whether most to admire the strength or the sanctity of his Fifth Book; but it would be difficult to produce objections to the system or detail of our Ecclesiastical polity—the result either of prejudices, misconceptions, or conscientious inquiry—that are not there met with a satisfactory consideration.

But after all, the main study for the Ministry must be concentrated in the wide field of divinity. And here indeed the student, like David, must "prepare

with all his might for the house of his God."* His people depend upon him, not only for public instruction, but for private direction and godly counsel. He had need then be a man of store; like Ezra, "a *ready* scribe in the law of God,"† "a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven." It is a sufficient reason for "the priest's lips to keep knowledge," that "they shall seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the the Lord of Hosts."‡ Yet how can he "keep knowledge," if he has not first gained it? How can he be "apt to teach,"§ if he has not first learned? How can he learn without study? There must be a laying in, in order to laying out.‖ Such a course of Ministerial reading seems therefore indispensable, as will embrace a comprehensive and systematic view of Scripture in its doctrinal light, practical obligation, and experimental influence. In the first of these departments, Robinson's Christian System and Dwight's System of Theology will furnish most valuable materials for digestion. In the latter fields, the writings of the Reformers, and, in the subsequent age, of the Puritans, open a treasure-house that will not easily be exhausted. The former are two well known to be specified. Among the latter, 'Owen,' as Mr. Cecil observes, 'stands at the head of his class of divines. His scholars will be more profound and enlarged, and better furnished than those of most other writers.'

* 1 Chron. xxix. 2. † Ezra vii. 6.
‡ Mal. ii. 7. § 1 Tim. iii. 2.

‖ It was an excellent reply to a complaint of a bad memory as a discouragement from study; *Lege, lege; aliquid hærebit.* That sentence in Prov. xiv. 13, deserves to be written in letters of gold upon your study table, "In all labour there is profit." To another young Ministerial student it was said, 'Abhor one hour of idleness, as you would be ashamed of one hour of drunkenness.'—Life of Mr. Thomas Shepard, in Mather's New-England, Book IV.

Indeed for luminous exposition, and powerful defence of Christian doctrine——for determined enforcement of practical obligation—for skilful anatomy of the self-deceitfulness of the heart—and for a detailed and wise treatment of the diversified exercise of Christian experience, he stands propably unrivalled. The mixture of human infirmity with such transcendent excellence will be found in an unhappy political bias —in an inveterate dislike to episcopal government,* and (as regards the character of his Theology,) a too close and constant endeavour to model the principles of the Gospel according to the propositions of human systems. But who would refuse to dig into the golden mine from disgust at the base alloy, that will ever be found to mingle itself with the ore?

No department, however, of Ministerial study is of greater importance than Pastoral Theology—— Chrysostom on the Priesthood, for its deep-toned solemnity of eloquence†—Herbert's Parson, for its primitive simplicity—Burnet, for its impressive and

* We refer not to the conscientiousness and decision of his views of independency, but to his aggressive spirit in interposing the language of animadversion upon the Establishment throughout his most spiritual and discursive writings. Dwight has defended the principles of Dissent from Episcopacy with equal power and determination; but in that spirit of Christian moderation, and deference to the opinion of his opponents, which conciliates respect, even when it fails of conviction.

† It is right, however, to remark upon the evident deficiency of Chrysostom's Treatise in those lively views and exercises of faith which are the grand stimulants to our work. But for the characteristic I have mentioned, combined with practical expositions and an elevated standard of Ministerial conduct and obligations, it is only to be equalled by Baxter's celebrated and invaluable work. The deficiency to which I have alluded disables him indeed as a sustaining comforter to the desponding Minister. But the man who could exclaim in fearful astonishment and hesitation—— Θαυμαζω εἰ τινά ἐστι των αρχοντων σωθῆναι; (Homil. on Heb. xiii. 17.) and who declared that he was shaken as with an

minute detail of the Pastoral obligations—Baxter's Reformed Pastor, for its awakening apprehensions of Ministerial responsibility, realizing it as in the immediate presence of God and in the light of eternity—these are works for the Minister's first shelf. Close by their side may stand Ministerial Biography—the embodying of the deep-felt obligations in active and devoted operation. Such lives as those of Archbishop Leighton, Alleine, P. Henry, M. Henry, Halyburton, Cotton Mather, Eliot, Brainerd, Doddridge, Martyn, Scott, and Richmond are of the highest value and consideration. More lessons of practical detail and encouragement may be learnt from this branch of study, than from whole treatises of abstract theology.

The Apostle appears to enforce the habit of study upon his beloved son as a means of preserving his youthful ministry from contempt.* And, indeed, as Dr. Buchanan has observed, 'in this age, when learning is general, an ignorant clergyman will be treated with contempt.'† There seems also a peculiar force

earthquake every time he read these words, (De Sacred. vi. 1.) must have much to teach us of more serious, self-abasing, and exciting views of our sacred work. The remark of animadversion of Chrysostom must admit of a qualified application to Baxter's work. His heart-stirring exhortations, would have lost none of their pungency, had they flowed more fully and naturally from the enlivening and constraining principles of faith in the promises of God, and a realized apprehension of the love of Christ.

* 1 Tim. iv. 12, 13.

† Church Missionary Proceedings, Fourteenth Anniversary, p. 353, note.—Cotton Mather remarks, upon the importance of habits of study, 'There never was an eminent, who was not an industrious man. You must be diligent in your business, if you hope to stand in any desirable circumstance before that Great King, unto whose service you are dedicated.' Student and Pastor, pp. 195, 196. 'I have directed close attention to this subject,' remarks a professor in an American Theological Seminary, 'and the result without one solitary exception is, that I never knew an individual gain any considerable mass of really

in the application of the Apostolic instruction to our subject. It was not given to 'a novice,' but to a convert of at least twelve or thirteen years standing, who had been blest from his earliest years with an excellent scriptural education,* who probably was endowed with good natural talents, spiritual gifts, and pre-eminent religious advantages under the apostle's personal tuition, and who being raised, as a youth, to an exalted situation in the church, must have made a satisfactory improvement of his privileges. Yet is he warned to instruct himself well, before he attempted to instruct others,—to "give attendance" first "to reading, then "to exhortation, to doctrine." Such advice given to an elder under such circumstances bears upon it the weight of authority.

Nor let it be thought, that studious habits must necessarily infringe upon the more active employment of our work. What shall we say to the nine ponderous folios of Augustine, and nearly the same number of Chrysostom, volumes not written, like Jerom's, in monastic retirement, but in the midst† of almost daily preaching engagements, and conflicting, anxious, and most responsible duties—volumes not of light reading —the rapid flow of shallow declamation, but the results of deep and well-digested thinking? The folios also of Calvin—the most diligent preacher,‡ and of Baxter

digested and valuable knowledge, *without unwearied* industry.' Professor Miller's Letter's on Clerical Habits addressed to a Student in the Seminary at Princeton, N. J. p. 256.

* 2 Tim. iii. 15.

† 'Ye heard yesterday—ye shall hear to-morrow'—very commonly occurs in their Homiletical writings.

‡ 'What shall I say of his indefatigable industry, even beyond the power of nature, which being paralleled with our loitering, I fear will exceed all credit? and may be a true object of admiration, how his lean, worn, spent, and weary body could possibly hold out.

the most laborious pastor, of his day—full of thought and matter, bear the same testimony to the entire consistency of industrious study with devoted Ministerial diligence. The secret of this efficiency seems to have much consisted in a deep and important sense of the value of that most precious of all talents—*time*, and of an œconomical distribution of its minutest particles for specific purposes. Mr. Alleine would often say, 'Give me a Christian that counts his time more precious than gold.'* Mr. Cotton† would express his regret after the departure of a visitor, 'I had rather have given this man a handful of money, than have been kept thus long out of my study.' Melancthon, when he had an appointment, expected not only the hour but the minute to be fixed, that time might not run out in the idleness of suspense. Seneca has long since taught us, that time is the only thing of which 'it is a virtue to be covetous.' And here we should be like the miser with his money—saving it with care, and spending it with caution. It is well to have a book for every spare hour, to improve what Boyle calls

He read every week in the year three divinity lectures, and every other week over and above; he preached every day, so that, (as Erasmus saith of Chrysostom) I do not know, whether more, the indefatigableness of the man, or his hearers. Yea, some have reckoned up that his lectures were yearly one hundred and eighty-six, his sermons two hundred and eighty-six, besides Thursday he sat in the presbytery,' &c. &c. Clark's Lives.

* Alleine's Life and Letters, p. 94.

† The grandfather of Cotton Mather, an excellent scholar, formerly of Emmanuel college, and one of the first settlers in New England. One of his contemporaries in New England, Mr. Norton, if he found himself not so much inclined to diligence and study, as at other times, would reflect upon his heart and ways, lest some unobserved sin should provoke the Lord to give him up to a slothful listless frame and spirit. In his diary he sometimes had these words—'Leve desiderium ad studendum: ponam ex peccato admisso.' Mather's Hist. of New England, Book iii.

the 'parentheses or interludes of time, which, coming between more important engagements, are wont to to be lost by most men for want of a value for them: and even by good men, for want of skill to preserve them. And since goldsmiths and refiners,' he remarks, 'are wont all the year long to save the very sweepings of their shops, because they may contain in them some filings or dust of those richer metals, gold and silver; I see not why a Christian may not be as careful, not to lose the fragments and lesser intervals of a thing incomparably more precious than any metal—time; especially when the improvement of them by our meleteticks may not only redeem so many portions of our life, but turn them to pious uses, and particularly to the great advantage of devotion.'*

The truth of Bishop Burnet's experience 'that a great measure of piety, with a very small proportion of learning, will carry one a great way,† must be fully admitted. Considerable latitude also is required in speaking of study as the means of the acquisition of learning. Some need more, some less. With some the cord must be drawn tighter—with others much may be left to the direction of their natural bias. Yet Archbishop Secker's remark, must, we think, be generally acknowledged, 'A point of great importunce to Clergymen is, that they be studious.'‡ Far, very far, would we be from maintaining the superior advantage of theological study to spiritual-mindedness. Yet we cannot but doubt the genuine tone of healthful spirituality, without an industrious habit. The religion of an idler is, to say the least, of a very questionable character. And there can be no doubt that a diligent

* Boyle's Reflections, pp. 9, 10. † Pastoral Care, ch. vii.
‡ Secker's Charges.

improvement of inferior talents by study, exercise, and prayer, will be more profitable to their possessor, and serviceable to the Church, than the mere gift of superior abilities suffered to slumber for want of use.

Different qualifications, however, are required for the improvement of study. Some need great patience. Ardent minds wish, and seem almost to expect, to gain all at once. There is here, as in religion, "a zeal not according to knowledge."—There is too great haste and too little time for weighing—for storing—for directing the application of what has been attained to the immediate purpose in hand. Hence arises that most injurious habit of skimming over books rather than perusing them. The mind has only hovered upon the surface, and attained but a confused remembrance of passing matter, and an acquaintance with first principles far too imperfect for practical utility.*

Some again need discretion in the direction of their study. They lose themselves in the multiplicity of books,† and they find to their cost, that in *reading* as well as in *making* books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh."‡ Bishop Wilkins observes,—'There is as much art and benefit in the

* 'Patient application is, literally, every thing. Without it you may have a number of half-formed ideas floating in your mind, but deep, connected, large, and consistent views of any subject you will never gain. Impatient haste is the bane of deep intellectual work. If you are investigating any important doctrine, be not ready to leave it. Come to it again and again; seeking light from every quarter; and perusing with attention the best books, until you have entered, as far as you are capable, into its profoundest merits. And if compelled by any circumstance to leave the subject before you have reached this point, hold it in reserve for another and more satisfactory examination. In short, let your motto, and, as far as practicable, your habit, be to leave nothing till you have thoroughly mastered it Professor Miller's Letters, pp. 256—258.

† Distrahit animum librorum multitudo. Seneca, Ep. i.

‡ Ecc. xii. 12.

right choice of such books with which we should be most familiar, as there is in the election of other friends or acquaintance, with whom we may most profitably converse.' Dr. Watts has remarked,—'It is of vast advantage for improvement of knowledge and saving time, for a young man to have the most proper books for his reading, recommended by a judicious friend.'* It is obvious that no man can read everything; nor would our real store be increased by the capacity to do so. The digestive powers would be overloaded, for want of time to act, and confusion would reign without control in the mind.† It is far more easy to furnish our library, than our understanding. A man may have read most extensively upon subjects of theology, and yet be as far from the attainments of a theologian as one that had never entered the field. Professor Campbell remarks, in his forcible manner,—'It has been the fault of many ages, and still is of the present age, that to have read much is to be very learned. There is not, I may say, a greater heresy against common-sense. Reading is doubtless necessary; and it

* Wilkins, Eccl. p. 44. Watts on the Improvement of the Mind, ch. iv. This and ch. v. abound with the most valuable instructions upon Christian study that can readily be met with. Professor Franck gives the same advice to young students, and accompanies it with the following admonitions. 'They should read little, but read that little well: they should prefer those works whose tendency it is to lay a solid foundation, and prove them in a sedate and attentive manner; never commencing any other book, until the subject of the former be perfectly understood and digested. If these monitions be neglected, they may become sciolists, but never men of learning; sophists, but never truly wise, the mind will be possessed with an intemperate thirst after "knowledge that puffeth up," and filled with unholy indifference for "the wisdom which cometh from above."' Franck's Guide to the Reading of the Scriptures, ch. iii.

† Fastidientis stomachi multa degustare, quæ ubi varia sunt et diversa, inquinant, non alunt. Seneca, Ep. i.

must be owned that eminence in knowledge is not to be attained without it. But two things are ever specially to be regarded on this topic, which are these: First, that more depends on the quality of what we read, than on the quantity. Secondly, more depends on the use which, by reflection, conversation, and composition, we have made of what we read, than upon both the former.* Mr. Fisk's remark upon missionary qualifications applies, 'More knowledge of languages should be acquired: I say, *more knowledge* of languages—rather than a knowledge of *more languages*.'† This has always been the view of the most judicious masters of study. Dr. Watts again observes,—'A well-furnished library and a capacious memory are indeed of singular use toward the improvement of the mind; but if all your learning be nothing else but a mere amassment of what others have written, without a due penetration into its meaning, and without a judicious choice and determination of your own sentiments, I do not see what title your head has to true learning above your shelves.'‡ Lord Bacon's directions on this matter are replete with admirable wisdom:

* Lectures on Systematic Theology, lect. i. Mr. Locke speake most excellently to this point. "There are fundamental truths, which lie at the bottom, the basis upon which a great many others rest, and in which they have their consistency. These are teeming truths, rich in store, with which they furnish the mind, and, like the lights of heaven, are not only beautiful and entertaining in themselves, but give light and evidence to other things, that without them could not be seen or known. These, and such as these, are the truths we should endeavour to find out and store our minds with." Conduct of the Understanding, § 43.

† Life of Pliny Fisk, Missionary to Palestine; a most valuable piece of Missionary, and indeed of Ministerial, Biography, p. 25. Mr. Fisk was one of the instances of subsequent conviction of the mistake, that intense and industrious study is inconsistent with ardent practical religion.

† Watts on the Improvement of the Mind, ch. i.

—'Read not to contradict and refute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not cursorily; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts of them made by others. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man: and therefore if a man write little, he had need have a good memory; if he confer little, he had need have much cunning, to appear to know what he doth not.' The accuracy of study is of far greater importance than its extent. 'A little study, well digested in a good, serious mind, will go a great way, and will lay in materials for a whole life.'* Books of indispensable importance we may still characterize with Lord Bacon as comparatively *few*. Masillon well distinguishes the main requisites, to be 'a love of study; a desire of becoming useful to our parish; a conviction of the necessity of deriving from prayer that knowledge which study does not afford; of being impressed with a desire of salvation, and of applying all the means of advancing in evangelical wisdom, to inspire our flock with a love of their duty, in order that they may the more easily be induced to practice it: in a word, a sincere desire to fulfil our ministry.'†

The active employment of the ministry must be expected materially to circumscribe our leisure opportunities. Hence the importance of a diligent improve-

* Burnet's Conclusion to the History of his own times.
† Massillon's Charges, p. 222.

ment of the season of preparation, that we may enter upon the work with a mind furnished for the successive calls upon our attention, counsel, and spiritual instruction. Nor is it of less moment, that the habit of study should as far as possible be maintained through life. The instructions of St. Paul to Timothy, so often alluded to, were given (as we have before hinted) to an Elder of some years standing in the church. Mr. Scott, his son informs us, spent many hours of every day to the last in his study.* As has been well observed by a beloved friend and brother,—'If we live only on old stores, we shall never enlarge our knowledge.' It is allowed, that it is not easy diligently to pursue a course of persevering study. Our families and our daily duties must not be neglected. It requires fixed plans, vigorously followed up. Our natural indolence, and the love of society, must be broken through. Cecil says, 'Every man, whatever be his natural disposition, who would urge his powers to the highest end, must be a man of solitary studies."

Yet, after all, the solidly-learned, the studious, and well-furnished man is but the unshapen mass from which the Christian Minister is formed. The plastic energy — the quickening influence of the Almighty Spirit is still needed to put light, life, and motion into the inert substance, to mould it into his image, and

* Scott's Life, pp. 600, 601.

† Bickersteth's Christian Hearer, pp. 243, 244. The whole chapter is replete with valuable thought upon Christian study. 'How few read enough to stock their minds! and the mind is no widow's cruse, which fills with knowledge as fast as we empty it. Why should a Clergyman labour less than a barrister? since, in spiritual things as well as temporal, it is "the hand of the diligent which maketh rich." Does the conscience, in fact, never whisper upon any topic in theology—"Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?"' On the want of success in the Ministry of the Church of England. Christian Observer, 1828, p. 420.

to make it a "vessel of honour meet for the Master's use." Nor must it be denied, that these studious habits, to which we have attributed considerable importance, are attended with proportionate temptations.* Any enlargement of intellectual knowledge has a natural tendency to add fuel to the fire of our self-importance. The habit of study growing into a passion, may crave indulgence at the expense of conscience or propriety, by pre-occupying the time that belongs to immediate duties, or interfering with other avocations of equal moment. Much, however, of apprehended danger will be repelled by the regulation of a sound judgment, and a spiritual mind, in directing these studies to the main end of the ministry. 'Let none of them entrench upon those hours that should be devoted to our study of the Bible, or our preparation for the pulpit. And wheresoever we find our inclination too much attached to any particular human science, let us set a guard upon ourselves, lest it rob us of divine studies, and our best improvement. A Minister should remember that himself with all his studies is consecrated to the service of the sanctuary. Let every thing be done therefore with a view to one great end. Let all the rest of our knowledge be like lines drawn from the vast circumference of universal nature, pointing to that divine centre, God and Religion. And let us pursue every part of science with a design to gain better qualifications thereby for our sacred work.'†

* See some valuable remarks on this subject in Bickersteth's Christian Student, chap. viii.

† Watt's Humble Endeavour for a Revival, pp. 17, 18. How closely did Henry Martin live in the spirit of this caution:—'May I be taught to remember that all other studies are merely subservient to the great work of ministering holy things to im-

This section cannot be better concluded than with Quesnel's exposition of the text which has formed its basis.—'Not to read or study at all, is to tempt God: to do nothing but study, is to forget the ministry: to study, only to glory in one's knowledge, is a shameful vanity: to study, in search of the means to flatter sinners, a deplorable prevarication: But to store one's mind with the knowledge proper to the saints by study and by prayer, and to diffuse that knowledge in solid instructions, and practical *exhortations*,—this is to be a prudent, zealous, and laborious Minister.'*

SECTION II.

SPECIAL STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THE connexion of this Section with the preceding, is peculiarly important. General habits of study, however well regulated and perseveringly maintained, will reflect not a ray of light and spiritual apprehen-

mortal souls. May the most holy works of the Ministry, and those which require most devotedness of soul, be the most dear to my heart.' Martyn's Life, p. 269.

* It may be important to add to this Section the course of study for proficiency in the Christian Ministry, pursued by one of the most profound Theologians of his or of any age. 'My method of study,' President Edwards informs us, 'from my first beginning the work of the Ministry, has been very much by writing; applying myself in this way to improve every important hint; pursuing the clue to my utmost, when any thing in reading, meditation, or conversation has been suggested to my mind, that seemed to promise light in any weighty point; thus penning what appeared to me my best thoughts on innumerable subjects, for my own benefit. The longer I prosecuted my studies in this method, the more habitual it became, and the more pleasant and profitable I found it. The further I travelled in this way, the more and wider the field opened; which has occasioned my laying out many things in my mind to do in this manner, (if God should spare my life,) which my heart hath been much set upon.' Edwards' Life, Works, pp. 79, 80.

sion of the Gospel, independent of the special study of the sacred volume. Nor is it sufficient that both these courses of study should be pursued together. Their mutual connexion is not that of *equality*, but of direct *subserviency* of general study to this specific purpose, a more enlightened and fruitful study of the word of God. 'I read other books,' Philip Henry used to say, 'that I may be the better able to understand the Scripture.'* The intellectual excitement arising from literary or theological study is carefully to be watched, lest it should deaden the freshness of our mind to the more spiritual study of the word. Martyn appears to have been most tenderly susceptible upon this point. 'So deep was his veneration for the word of God, that when a suspicion arose in his mind, that any other book he might be studying, was about to gain an undue influence on his affections, he *instantly* laid it aside, nor would he resume it till he had felt and realized the paramount excellence of the Divine oracles. He could not rest satisfied, till all those lesser lights, that were beginning to dazzle him, had disappeared before the effulgence of the Scriptures.'† There is great danger also, of drawing the Bible to our studies instead of drawing our studies to the Bible,

* Sometimes he would say—'Prefer having eyes to read the Scriptures, and be blind to every thing else, rather than to read every thing else and neglect the Bible.' P. Henry's Life, pp. 24, 206. 'Study close,' said his excellent son, addressing young Ministers, 'study close; especially make the Bible your study. There is no knowledge, which I am more desirous to increase in than that. Men get wisdom by books, but wisdom towards God is to be gotten out of God's book; and that by *digging*. Most men do but walk over the surface of it, and pick up here and there a flower. Few dig into it. Read over other books to help you to understand *that* book. Fetch your prayers and sermons from thence. The volume of inspiration is a full fountain, ever overflowing, and hath always something new.' M. Henry's Life, Williams's Edition, p. 222.

† Martyn's Life, p. 69.

in which case they will be worse than unprofitable. 'When *commencing* the *study of Divine* truth amid all the jarring opinions of human authors, it is of inexpressible moment to begin with studying the pure word of God, and to go regularly through the whole of that word, before we prepossess our minds with human opinions. While *continuing* the *study of Divine* truth, it is also of vast moment to keep up the daily reading of considerable portions of the pure word of God, and so to keep Scriptural truth (as it has been observed) continually revolving in the mind. It will be the only effective preservative against the taint and deterioration which the mind might otherwise receive from reading human authors.'*

The Bible then is to be, in a true Protestant sense, the *Liber Sacerdotalis*. 'The chief and top of the knowledge of George Herbert's 'Country Parson,' consists in the Book of Books, the storehouse and magazine of life and comfort—*the Holy Scriptures*.'† As no one can pretend to be a Christian without a competent acquaintance with them, so no one can be qualified for the sacred office without such an accurate and spiritual insight into their contents, as shall prove him to be not only a "faithful man," but "able to teach others also."‡ We have been well reminded of this from the highest ecclesiastical authority. 'It is of the Gospel,' said Archbishop Secker to his clergy, 'that you are ministers; all other learning will leave you

* Bickersteth's Christian Hearer, p. 232.

† Herbert's Country Parson, ch. iv.—a book, as Isaac Walton remarks—in his characteristic style—'so full of plain, prudent, and useful rules, that the Country Parson, that can spare twelve pence, and yet wants it, is scarcely excusable, because it will both direct him what he ought to do, and convince him for not having done it.'

‡ 2 Tim. ii. 2.

essentially unqualified; and this alone, (the doctrine and precepts of the Gospel) comprehends every thing that is necessary.' With this end he recommends a diligent perusal of the Holy Scriptures.* Indeed if the Bible be the fountain of light and truth, it is evident that we cannot distinguish light from darkness, or truth from error in human writings, without an enlightened and enlarged apprehension of the word of God. It is only by this touchstone that we can "prove all things," so as to "hold fast that which is good."† Probably there is no diligent student, but has felt President Edward's remark to be the result of his own experience. 'I find it would be very much to my advantage to be thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures. When I am reading doctrinal books, or books of controversy, I can proceed with abundantly more confidence, and can see upon what foundation I stand?‡

But it is a study, a searching into the Scriptures, that we are contemplating, digging with the patient investigating spirit of the miner into hidden treasure of unsearchable riches.§ Some with good intentions and competent capacities, are in danger of becoming crude and inexperienced throughout their course, by substituting warm impressions of Scripture for that close study of its sacred contents which can alone form a solid and efficient Ministry. 'In general,' Mr. Scott remarks, 'I have found it advantageous sometimes to read the Scriptures with such exactness, as to weigh

* Secker's Charges, p. 267. † 1 Thess. v. 21.
‡ Edw. Life. Works i. 24.
§ Prov. ii. 4. John v. 39. See Matthew Henry's Counsel *ut supra*, and compare the account of Zwingle's diligent study of the Scriptures in Scott's Continuation of Milner, Vol. ii. Part. ii.

every expression, and the connexion, as if I were about to preach upon every verse, and then to apply the result to my own case, character, experience, and conduct, as if it had been directly addressed to me—in short to make the passages into a kind of sermons, as if about to preach to others, and then to turn the whole application on myself, as far as suited to my case. At other times I have read a passage more generally, and then selected two or three of the most important observations from it, and endeavoured to employ my mind in meditation on them, and consider how they bore on the state of my heart, or on my past life, or on those things which I heard or observed, in the world or the Church, and to compare them with the variety of sentiments, experiences, conducts, or prominent characters, with which we become gradually more and more acquainted.'* It is most important also, that our research should compass, as far as possible, the whole extent of the mine. There is a wise scattering of the truth over the whole surface of Scripture, which is far more adapted to the ends of instruction, than would have been a compression of any of its component parts within their several departments. None of us probably are wholly free from undue partialities, and if our favourite doctrines had been concentrated in any particular division of the volume, an exclusive or disproportioned attention to those parts would have contracted our views of the whole system. The present disposition of truth, however, compels us to study the whole volume, and then to consider the whole mind of God, by which means our views are extended to the length and breadth of the land while we insensibly

* Life, pp. 328, 329.

imbibe more of the enlarged spirit of the Divine revelation.

Professor Franck's Guide to the Reading of the Scriptures gives most admirable rules for the intelligent, devotional, and practical study of the Scripture. Mr. Horne's Introduction to the Scripture furnishes also a valuable digest of thoughtful matter upon the subject.* Our limits admit only of general remarks upon the great preparation requisite for admittance into this treasury of sacred truth. A submission of soul to the word in the course of the study of it, is the way to be taught of God. In this way, even if some should make a more successful progress than ourselves, yet the lowest proficiency will be as serviceable to its possessor, as theirs will be to them, who shall have reached the highest attainments in Divine knowledge.

Dodwell points out an important means of increasing in Scriptural knowledge. 'It would certainly be very becoming,' he remarks, 'and very beneficial too, for a professed divine to make the Bible his commonplace book for all his other studies. It would be at once an assistance to his memory, because the necessary practice of his profession must imprint this more upon him than any thing else; and it would exercise his judgment more than any other arts of commonplacing, because it would fix on him a design, and by that means imprint things on his memory by their usefulness, which is the most beneficial and improving sort of memory.'† This was a part of Philip Henry's preparatory study for the ministry—to use an interleaved Bible, in which he wrote short notes upon texts

*Horne's Introduction, Vol. ii. Part ii. †Letters of Advice, p. 235.

of Scripture as they occured. The same plan he recommended to young men when they came to him for counsel, that they would thus 'insert such expositions and observations as occur occasionally in sermons and other books which,' he would say, 'are more happy and considerable sometimes than those that are found in the professed commentators. I profess,' he would tell them, 'to teach no other learning but Scripture learning.'* The importance of a spirit of research in the field of Scripture is sufficiently obvious from the character and extent of the Ministerial requisition to 'keep back nothing that is profitable,† to the people. Strong meat is wanted for the adults as well as milk for babes. And those that have made progress through the diligence of faith, must not be hindered in their advance to higher attainments by being bound up in the same line and measure with others, who with the same advantages have come short. The main study of the Ministry is to carry our people forward, according to the original design, "for the perfecting of the saints," to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."‡ The exposition, therefore, of the deep things of God with reverential modesty is included in our commission, and therefore demands a deep and accurate study of the volume of Revelation; and the difficulties which yet remain, and will remain to the end, are among the most profitable fruits of research in the exercise of faith, humility, and subjection to the authority of Scripture, and of habitual dependance upon Divine teaching for necessary instruction.

In speaking of commentaries, as connected with the study of the Scriptures, it is most important to

* Life, p. 206. † Acts xx. 20. ‡ Eph. iv. 12. Col. i. 28.

distinguish between their use and abuse. Their service or disservice wholly depends upon the place which they occupy in the system of study. Let them not be discarded as utterly useless, for many of them at least comprise the labours of men who had a far deeper insight into the word of God than those who despise them are generally likely to attain. But let them not be placed before the word, nor be consulted (habitually at least,) until the mind has been well stored with the study of God's own book. Professor Campbell speaks most admirably upon this point—'I would not have you at first,' says he, 'recur to any of them. Do not mistake me, as though I meant to signify that there is no good to be had from commentaries. I am far from judging thus of the commentaries in general, any more than of systems. But neither are proper for the beginner, whose object it is impartially to search out the mind of the Spirit, and not to imbibe the scheme of any dogmatist. Almost every commentator hath his favourite system, which occupies his imagination, biasses his understanding, and more or less tinges all his comments. The only assistance which I would recommend are those, in which there can be no tendency to warp your judgment. It is the serious and frequent reading of the Divine oracles accompanied with fervent prayer; it is the comparing Scripture with Scripture; it is the diligent study of the languages in which they are written; it is the knowledge of those histories and antiquities to which they allude. These indeed will not tell you what you are to judge of every passage, and so much the better. God hath given you judgment, and requires you to exercise it. "And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"' In answer to

the question, 'when it is proper to recur to systems and commentators,' the Professor replies, 'after you have acquired such an insight into the spirit and sentiments of sacred writ, that you are capable of forming some judgment of the conformity or contrariety of the doctrine of these authors to that infallible standard. With the examination of such human compositions the *studies of the theologian ought in my judgment to be concluded, and not begun.*"* This appears to be the only safe use of commentaries, while the advantages of this course are inestimable. We avail ourselves freely of all the store of human wisdom within our reach, while at the same time our "faith does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."†

We might illustrate the importance of this principle by instances of no improbable occurrence. Suppose a Theological student of ardent and intelligent mind, but with unformed or unfixed Biblical principles, to sit down to Poole's invaluable Synopsis,

* Campbell on Systematic Theology, Lect. ii. This was Dr. Doddridge's Plan from the commencement of his studies.—Orton's Life: Chap. I. Bishop Spratt mentions the instance of a Bishop in the troublous times, confined nearly twenty years in the Tower, plundered of his library, and applying himself to the exclusive study of the Scriptures as the faithful companion of his solitude, and solace of his afflictions. 'But what was very remarkable,' observes the bishop in giving this history, 'and for which I am bold to produce him as an instance worthy your imitation—I know he was often heard to profess solemnly, that in all his former studies, and various readings and observations, he had never met with a more useful guide, or a surer interpreter, to direct his paths in the dark places of the lively oracles, to give information to his understanding in the obscure passages, or satisfaction to his conscience in the experimental truths of them, than when he was thus driven by necessity to the assiduous contemplation of the Scripture alone, and to weigh it by itself, as it were, in the balance of the sanctuary.'—Charge to Diocese of Rochester—Clergyman's Instructor, pp. 265, 266.

† 1 Cor. ii. 5.

or even to make it a book of frequent reference; this digest of Critici Sacri would soon prove to him a Sylva Critica. He would find opinions successively over-thrown which had passed before him with more or less of conviction. Or more frequently, two conflicting sets of opinion would command his attention, while he would be without an umpire to decide upon their respective claims to accuracy; and consequently his own judgment (if indeed he were able to form any under such circumstances,) would be formed with hesitation, or taken up in haste or partiality, rather than as the result of deliberate and enlightened conviction. Or suppose a case of more ordinary occurrence. A student of sincere intentions but immature attainments in Scriptural knowledge, has heard much (and he cannot well have heard too much) commendation of Mr. Scott's Commentary, or his General views of Theology. He knows them to have given an influential tone to the religion of his time. He reads them with avidity,—he receives them as the standard of orthodoxy—and feels himself impregnably entrenched in the strong positions of Scripture truth. But he may hear Mr. Scott's principles controverted with considerable force and subtlety of argument, and *apparently* upon an equal basis of Scriptural authority. Now if his mind has not been exercised in the field of Holy Writ, he will be utterly unable to bring the opposing dogmas to an infallible standard. He will be incompetent to compare them respectively with the analogy of faith, and therefore, though from partiality, respect, or hesitating conviction he may still maintain his ground, yet his basis of truth—not having been fixed upon the sole and immoveable rock of the Bible—will be materially shaken. His standard,

if he should be a standard-bearer, will be lifted up with a feeble and trembling hand. His system will bear too strong marks of indecision throughout the whole tone of his Ministrations to afford any sanguine prospect of efficiency. The principle of this course of spiritual reading is excellently illustrated by the habit of the venerable writer just referred to. 'Having perhaps heard or read the opinions of different men on any disputed subject, I have, in my daily reading of the Scriptures, constantly kept those opinions in view, that I might at length form my judgment on which side truth lay. In doing this, I have always aimed to keep my mind from the two extremes, on the one hand, of giving up my own opinion, from a kind of false humility, and deference for men, without being previously convinced that I had been mistaken: and, on the other hand, of assuming my opinion to be truth, so as to exclude light, especially if it came from an enemy, or a person not entitled to much deference. So that I have always aimed to be open to conviction; to bring every man's probable opinion to the touchstone, and to give it a fair trial, if not tried before; but not to receive it, without plainly perceiving its agreement with the Scripture; and at the same time to aim that my heart might be suitably affected with the conclusions of my understanding—in which I have principally failed.'*

Upon the same principles Archbishop Usher gave the following wise instructions to young Ministers.

'1. Read and study the Scriptures carefully, wherein is the *best learning* and *only infallible truth.* They can

* Scott's Life, pp. 329, 330, and some valuable remarks of his son in enforcing this peculiar feature of his father's example, pp. 667, 668.

furnish you with the best materials for your sermons; the *only rules of faith and practice*; the most powerful motives to persuade and convince the conscience; and the strongest arguments to confute all errors, heresies, and schisms.

'2. Take not *hastily up with other* men's *opinions without due trial*, nor vent your own conceits, but *compare them first* with the *analogy of faith, and rules of holiness recorded in the Scriptures, which are the proper tests of all opinions and doctrines.*'*

There can be very little doubt but a large proportion of the differences which subsist in the Christian world may be traced to a feeble, uninfluential recognition of the supreme authority of Scripture. Different tracks are taken at the commencement of the inquiry —'What is truth.' The mind is pre-occupied with some human system. Different minds are acted upon by different biases previously given. What wonder therefore that the unity of truth should be destroyed; and that, in the place of the clear and heavenly light of scriptural revelation, the prejudices of men should be conflicting with each other, instead of bowing with implicit subjection to the obedience of faith? In fact, such is the constitution of the human mind, that genuine independence is a matter of extreme difficulty and rare occurrence. Attachment to some particular system is a spiritual self-indulgence, which too often guides even in reading the Word of God, and gives it an individual character, rather than receives a complexion from it.

'*Bonus textuarius est bonus Theologus*,' is a maxim therefore to be kept in constant remembrance, as

* Life of Usher, by his Chaplain, Dr. Parr, prefixed to his valuable Collection of Letters, p. 87.

marking a grand Ministerial qualification, "mighty in the Scriptures." The importance of this preparation is so beautifully expressed by Witsius, that we cannot forbear giving the quotation: 'Let the Theologian ascend from the lower school of natural study to the higher department of Scripture, and sitting at the feet of God as his teacher, learn from his mouth the hidden mysteries of salvation; which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard; which none of the princes of this world knew;" which the most accurate reason cannot search out; which the heavenly chorus of angels, though always beholding the face of God, "desire to look into." In the hidden book of Scripture, and no where else, are opened the secrets of the more sacred wisdom. Whatever is not drawn from them—whatever is not built upon them—whatever does not most exactly accord with them, however it may recommend itself by the appearance of the most sublime wisdom, or rest upon ancient tradition, consent of learned men, or the weight of plausible argument, is vain, futile, and, in short, a very lie. "To the law and to the testimony. If any one speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Let the Theologian delight in these sacred oracles; let him exercise himself in them, day and night; let him meditate in them; let him live in them; let him draw all his wisdom from them; let him compare all his thoughts with them; let him embrace nothing in religion which he does not find here. Let him not bind his faith to a man—nor to a Prophet, Apostle, or even an Angel himself, as if the dictum of either man or angel were to be the rule of faith. Let his whole ground of faith be in God alone. For it is a Divine, not a human faith, which we learn and teach;

so pure that it can rest upon no ground but the authority of God, who is never false, and never can deceive. The attentive study of the Scriptures has a sort of constraining power. It fills the mind with the most splendid form of heavenly truth, which it teaches with purity, solidity, certainty, and without the least mixture of error. It soothes the mind with an inexpressible sweetness; it satisfies the sacred hunger and thirst for knowledge with flowing rivers of honey and butter; it penetrates into the innermost heart with irresistible influence; it imprints its own testimony so firmly upon the mind, that the believing soul rests upon it with the same security as if it had been carried up into the third heaven, and heard it from God's own mouth; it touches all the affections, and breathes the sweetest fragrance of holiness upon the pious reader, even though he may not perhaps comprehend the full extent of his reading. We can scarcely say how strongly we are opposed to that preposterous method of study, which, alas! too much prevails among us, of forming our views of divine things from human writings, and afterwards supporting them by Scripture authorities, the result either of our own inquiry, or adduced by others too rashly, and without further examination or bearing upon the subject; when we ought to draw our views of Divine truths immediately from the Scriptures themselves, and to make no other use of human writings, than as indices, marking those places in the chief points of Theology, from which we may be instructed in the mind of the Lord.' This exquisite Master of Theology proceeds next in the same strain to remark the importance of the Student giving himself up to the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit, as the only mean of obtaining

a spiritual and saving acquaintance with the rule of faith, 'it being needful that he that is a disciple of Scripture should also be a disciple of the Spirit.' But the whole Oration De Vero Theologo, and its accompaniment, De Modesto Theologo, are so intrinsically valuable for the elegance of their Latinity, the beauty of their thoughts, and most of all for the heavenly unction that breathes throughout the compositions, that nothing further seems needed, than to commend them to the earnest consideration of the Ministerial Student.*

The serious exhortation of our Ordination Service, seems to refer to General Study, and specifically to the Study of the Scriptures, and therefore will fitly sum up this section in connexion with the preceding. 'You will apply yourselves wholly to this one thing, and draw *all your cares and studies* this way; continually praying to God the Father by the mediation of our only Saviour Jesus Christ, for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Ghost; that *by daily weighing of the Scriptures*, you may wax riper and stronger in your Ministry.'

SECTION III.

HABITS OF SPECIAL PRAYER.

LUTHER long since has said, 'Prayer, meditation, and temptation, made a Minister.' No one will hesitate to admit the importance of the first of these qualifications—who has any perception of the weight of Ministerial responsibility—who has been led to

* See Witsii, Misc. Sacra, vol. ii. Compare also similar thoughts, expressed with the same spiritual holiness, in Vitringa Typus Doctr. Prophet. pp. 106—108.

know that his "sufficiency is of God," and that prayer is the appointed channel of Divine communications.—What need has the student of wisdom, humility and faith, to ascertain the simplicity of his purpose—his freedom from interested motives—his necessary qualifications, and the concurrent leadings of the Providence and Spirit of God calling him to the holy office! And what other method is ordained of knowing the will of God, than the habit of "watching daily at his gates, waiting at the posts of his doors?"* In his General Studies abstracted from prayer, he will find a dryness—a want of drawing to this one centre of the Ministry, or perhaps a diversion from the main object into some tract of self-indulgence.† And even in his special study of the scriptures he will feel himself, as Witsius says—'like a blind man contemplating the heavens. All is to him, as when the world in its original confusion "was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." God must speak to his heart "Let

* Prov. viii. 34.

† An important and encouraging hint is given to us in the Life of Dr. Andrew Willet—'As he applied his heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and to that end, according to that Apostolical direction, "gave attendance unto reading," so likewise he followed that godly advice of Cyprian to Donatus, Epist. lib. ii. Epist. 2, to mingle frequent prayer with diligent reading: 'Sometimes,' he saith, 'speak to God—and sometimes let God speak to thee;' and he *professed to his friends how much he had thereby improved his talent.*' Mr. Scott bears the same testimony—Speaking of his Scriptural studies, he adds, 'But a spirit of continual prayer, mixed with reading, has been my principal help in all these things.' Life, page 330. Quesnel, speaking of the importance of the study of the Scriptures to the Christian Minister, adds—'He must learn them otherwise than by study. The unction of the Spirit is a great master in this science, and it is by prayer that we become his scholars.' Much prayer and little study advance the work of God more than abundance of study without prayer.' On John vii. 15.

there be light," and "for this he will be inquired of to do it unto him." In calculating the cost of the work—the Ministerial exercises of faith and patience superadded to the daily difficulties of the Christian life, what an awakening call is there for prayer, for additional supplies of heavenly influence, that his knowledge may grow "unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding," that his heart may be constrained to a cheerful and ready obedience—that all his powers may be consecrated to this sole object—and that the whole work of preparation may be sealed by his especial and multiplied blessing. George Herbert justly remarks of 'some in a preparatory way,' that their 'aim and labour must be, not only to get knowledge, but to subdue and mortify all lusts and affections, and not to think, that, when they have read the fathers or school-men, a Minister is made, and the thing done. *The greatest and hardest preparation is within.*'* And indeed *hic labor—hoc opus est.* To bring the heart to the work and to keep it there—to exchange the indulgence of ease for labour and self-denial, a good name in the esteem of the world for the reproach of Christ and of his cross—to endure the prospect of successive disappointment and discouragement,—this it is that raises within, the spirit of despondency; and of this "evil spirit" it may be truly said "this kind can come forth by nothing *but by prayer* and fasting."†

In considering the office of the Christian Minister as an expositor of the word of God, Wickliff's judgment of the main qualification is equally striking and accurate. 'He should *be a man of prayer*—he

* Country Parson, chap. ii. † Mark ix. 29.

*needs the internal instruction of the primary Teacher.'** Dr. Owen observes,'† with his usual impressiveness, 'For a man solemnly to undertake the interpretation of any portion of Scripture *without invocation of God*, to be taught and instructed by his Spirit, is a high provocation of him, nor shall I expect the discovery of truth from any one who thus proudly engages in a work so much above his ability. But this is *the sheet anchor* of a faithful expositor in all difficulties; nor can he *without this* be satisfied that he hath attained the mind of the Spirit in any divine revelation. When all other helps fail, as they frequently do, this will afford him the best relief. The labours of former expositors are of excellent use; but they are far from having discovered the depth of this vein of wisdom; nor will the best of our endeavours prescribe limits to our successors; and the reason why the generality go in the same tract, except in some excursions of curiosity, is not giving themselves up to the conduct of the Holy Spirit in the diligent performance of their duty.'

The first Ministers of the Gospel were prepared for their work (unconsciously indeed to themselves) by their Master's retirement for the continuance of a whole night of prayer to God.‡ In a similar way, the first Missionaries to the Gentiles were sanctified and sent forth to their work.§ Had they proceeded on their mission without this holy preparation, they would doubtless have "returned, like the nobles of Judah, with their pitchers empty, ashamed and confounded, and covering their heads."‖ They would have

* Milner's Church Hist. iv. 134. † See his Work on the Spirit.
‡ Luke vi. 12—16. § Acts xiii. 2, 3.
‖ Jer. xiv. 3.

brought back no such tidings as, in a different spirit, they were enabled to do, to the great joy of their brethren, of the conversion of the Gentiles, and of the great things "that God had done with them."* An entrance upon the great work of the ministry, without the spirit of prayer, would be to "go a" most fearful "warfare at our own charges." The kingdom of Satan would have little to apprehend from an attack of literature, or from any systematic mechanism of external form. The outworks may be stormed, but the citadel would remain impregnable. "The prey" will never be "taken from the mighty, nor the lawful captives delivered," by any other power than the Ministry of the Gospel clothed with Almighty energy. By this means the first attack was made by the servants of Christ in simple dependance on the faithful promise, waited for in earnest prayer.† The Christian Ministry is a work of faith; and that it may be a work of faith, it must be a work of prayer. Prayer obtains faith, while faith in its reaction quickens to increasing earnestness of prayer. Spiritual, enlightened, and encouraging views of the Ministry flow from the habit of diligent waiting on God. We may therefore safely conclude with Bernard,—'Utilus lectio —utilis eruditio—sed magis necessaria unctio, quippe quæ docet de omnibus.'

If then the candidate for the Christian Ministry never bows his knee at the throne of grace without making the momentous work before him a subject of large supplication, he will do well. But if he be led to add to his customary times of prayer seasons of retirement, consecrated to the sole purpose of contemplating the work, and separating himself to its

* Acts xiv. 27. xv. 3, 4. † Acts i. 8, 14, with ii. 1.

service, as in the immediate presence of his God, he will do better. A man of special prayer will be a man of special faith: and faith is the master-spring of the ministry—the power which enables "the worm to thresh the mountains,"* and, in holy confidence, to cast them down before him—"Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."†

SECTION IV.

EMPLOYMENT IN THE CURE OF SOULS.

"EXERCISE thyself unto godliness,"‡ was one of the wise rules of the Apostle to his beloved son, for the course of his Ministry. And there is scarcely any rule which bears with more important application to the noviciate. Its connexion also with the rule of study in the succeeding context is worthy of remark. "Giving attendance to reading," without the active exercises of the sacred employment, would form a most incomplete and inefficient ministry. The want of exercise is as hurtful to the spiritual as to the bodily system; and no studious habits will circulate with beneficial influence, unless their results are operative in Christian activity. The Apostle allowed no entrance into the lowest department of the Ministry, without a period of probation. Even the deacons must first "be proved."§ Their natural capacity and spiritual qualifications, as well as their personal consistency, must be put to the trial, before they should "use their office" in the Church of God. Now though no man can take the sacred office unto himself,

* Isa. xli. 14, 15. † Zech. iv. 6.
‡ 1 Tim. iv. 7. § 1 Tim. iii. 10.

until he be solemnly called to it by the Church, yet there is much subordinate employment in the cure of souls legitimately to exercise the natural capacities of the young probationer, to increase his store of experience, and impart considerable benefit to the Church, and reciprocal advantage to himself. The *superintendence of a Sunday-school* has been found, in various instances, of most important usefulness. Many have drawn from this employment most valuable lessons of practical utility in the future exercise, and during the whole course, of their Ministry. The *instruction of the poor*, whether in the way of casual intercourse, or with more or less of system, may be conducted with Christian humility, perseverance, and love, without infringement on the peculiar claims and character of the Ministry. And perhaps more preparation for future usefulness may be gathered from this employment, than from many months of contemplative study. An insight into the real condition of the future subjects of his parochial Ministration, and the acquaintance with their modes of expression, their peculiar difficulties and temptations, the causes of their ignorance, the wisest and most successful avenues of approach to them—this is knowledge, in which it would be well to be initiated, before the solemn obligation is undertaken, and which will be found of considerable benefit in giving an individual character to the tone of subsequent Ministrations. It is the defect of this knowledge previously acquired, that gives a *general*, and *therefore unimpressive*, character to the early ministrations of many young men of a right spirit. The most excellent sermons composed in the study, must, under such circumstances, necessarily fail in adaptation to the

wants and circumstances of the people—they must exhibit a want of sympathy in their distresses—a want of consideration of their ignorance—a want of accuracy in drawing the lines of character, and consequently in directing the language of conviction or consolation, of "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness" to the precise cases of just application. The *visitation of the sick* also, in the exercise of Christian sympathy, is of the highest importance to the probationer for the Ministry. Lessons are learned here that could never be learned in the study. *There* the importance of the Gospel may be described or contemplated—*here* it is realized. *There* recollections may be digested with seriousness and accuracy of the vanity of the world, the nearness and prospects of eternity, the danger of delay, the blessedness of preparation, the deceitfulness of the heart, the power of Satan, the grace and love of the Saviour,—*here* the scenes are before the eye. Oh! how much "better is it to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting?"* How important is the observant study of the sick chamber! How responsible is a frequent attendance upon it! How fruitful and convincing are the instructions connected with it! How varied and direct their bearing upon every department of public and private Ministration? Many have been trained for important usefulness in the Church by frequent, and, in many instances, painful attendance, upon this school of instruction.†

* Eccles. vii. 2.

† 'One of the best universities, and one far too much unvisited, is the retired apartment of suffering poverty, the cottage or the garret of the afflicted; and one of the best lectures in divinity, and most fruitful of Christian conferences, is conversation on the

The Ministry is not, like some branches of natural science, a work of contemplation, but of active, anxious, devoted employment. The spirit, business, and delight of doing good must therefore form an essential part of Preparation for the work. It would be well, indeed, for the disciple of the Ministry to let no day pass, of which he was obliged to say, 'Perdidi diem.' It would probably be well to act as much as possible upon system, grounded upon a deep sense of personal neglect, strengthened by incessant prayer, and maintained by a course of persevering efforts. Let him begin with his own family. Let him place their individual cases before him for distinct consideration and prayer—then pass on to neighbours, friends, societies with which he may be more or less connected, and with all of whom his connexion is most responsible. However his sphere may be contracted, the diligent cultivation of it will furnish abundant employ for his exertions. There are in the most limited sphere neighbors to be instructed—the sick to be visited—the young to be won over to the ways of God. Opportunities daily press before him, which are as "the price in the hands of a fool that hath no heart" to improve them, but which to him are treasures of inestimable price, and talents of most solemn account. The circle of influence, and the field of opportunity, will extend in proportion to the improvement bestowed upon them. Or even supposing their limits continue to be contracted, yet there will be sufficient exercise of faith, prayer, and labour, to

things of God with those "poor of this world," whom "God hath chosen rich in faith."—Many a Minister has there first learned the lesson of saving knowledge for his own soul, and thence has carried the best lessons which he could give to his people.' Bickersteth's Christian Student, p. 37.

serve the important purpose of Ministerial preparations; and "he that is faithful in that which is least, will be faithful also in much.'*

Perhaps I may be allowed the remark, in connexion with the present subject, that a very rapid transition from the studies of the University to the services of the Sanctuary, does not appear, in ordinary cases, desirable. At least where the studies have been vigorously pursued, surely some interval of active (*not monastic*) retirement is needed to escape into a short course of employment that would draw and maintain the mind in a more consecrated habit of action. The schools of Plato and Newton will discipline the mind into most useful Ministerial habits, and furnish it with many important lessons of instruction. But their influence upon the general character is far too remote for immediate practical purposes. They supply no direct materials, whether of observation or of experience, for the contemplated work. A system of probationary exercise upon a spiritual basis, preparatory to Ordination, would be a most desirable appendage to our National Establishment. In defect of this advantage, an interval more or less protracted, according to circumstances, and spent in inspection or initiation into the routine of the Christian Ministry under the superintendance of a judicious and experienced Pastor, might prove a commencing era of Ministerial fruitfulness. Opportunities would be afforded of learning, which is the best preparation for teaching. Converse with experienced and exercised Christians would offer many advantages.† The

* Luke xvi. 10.

† Amongst which Dr. Doddridge enumerates. 1. Increase to our own stock of knowledge. 2. Excitement to our own spirits:

habit of religious conversation would be maintained with perhaps more enlargement to the mind, even than private study, and much would be acquired in this field of observation and incipient engagements, which no other medium could adequately supply.*

If the writer should be considered to have spoken upon this subject with decision, it is because he can speak from experience. It was from this source that he derived his first rudiments of the Christian Ministry. From a temporary residence in a country village, and from the initiation into the subsidiary departments of the work by the affectionate care of a venerable relative,† he conceives himself to have gained his first interest in this hallowed and blessed work, and sufficient insight into its diversified character and solemn obligations to acknowledge a debt to the end of his course.

3. The conciliation of respect among them: 4. The forming of an experimental strain of preaching. See his Lectures on Preaching.

* President Edwards remarks in his Diary,—'More than ever convinced of the usefulness of religious conversation. I find by conversing on natural philosophy, I gain knowledge abundantly faster, and see the reason of things much clearer than in private study. Wherefore, resolved earnestly to seek at all times for religious conversation, and for those persons that I can with profit, delight, and freedom so converse with.' Works, i. 25.

† The Rev. Dr. Bridges, Vicar of Willoughby, Warwickshire.

PART II.

GENERAL CAUSES OF THE WANT OF SUCCESS IN THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

PART II.

GENERAL CAUSES OF THE WANT OF SUCCESS IN THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE complaint of the prophet, "Who hath believed our report,"* has been applicable to every successive Ministry in the Church of God. It was echoed in reference even to the Ministry of Him who "spake as never man spake;" who retained a listening multitude hanging upon his lips, and "wondering at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth."† It was again repeated under the Apostolic dispensation, clothed as it was, "with the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power."‡ And it has ever since been expressive of the experience of faithful labourers in the Lord's harvest. A young Minister indeed—speaking his message from the feeling of a full heart, and without an accurate previous calculation of the cost—may anticipate a cordial conviction and reception of the truth, as the almost immediate result. But painful experience will always correct such unwarranted expectations. The power of Satan, the current of sin, and the course of this world—all combine to give the character of a spiritual conflict to our work. But, as complaint should lead to inquiry (and surely no inquiry can be more important), we will proceed to mark a few of the more general causes that operate unfavourably upon our work.

* Isa. liii. 1. † John xii. 37, 38. ‡ Rom. x. 16.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCRIPTURAL WARRANT AND CHARACTER OF MINISTERIAL SUCCESS — TOGETHER WITH THE SYMPTOMS OF WANT OF SUCCESS.

A FEW remarks upon these preliminary topics will fully introduce the discussion of the general subject.

I. It may be laid as the first ground of our inquiry that *the warrant of Ministerial success is sure.* It rests not upon any efforts of human wisdom, zeal, or suasion,—but upon the "word for ever settled in heaven." God has renewed the symbol and pledge of his promise in every drop of rain that falls to fertilize the earth.* The terms also of our Master's promise are most express,† and the history of his fulfilment most uniform. The day of Pentecost exhibited the first seal to its faithfulness.;‡ and the Apostles, whether preaching to persecuted Jews or to maddened idolators, every where found the same "seal of their apostleship." In Thessalonica "some believed and consorted with them."§ At Athens, where "some mocked," and others hung back in suspense, "howbeit certain clave to Paul and believed."‖ At Rome, "some believed the things that were spoken, while some believed not."¶ By the *same* power attendant upon their Ministry, "the churches were then established in the faith, and increased in number daily."** Now, as bearing the same commission, we have the same sure warrant

* See Isa. lv. 10, 11. † See Mat. xxviii. 20.
‡ Acts ii. 37—39. § Ib. xvii. 4, 5. ‖ Ib. xvii. 32—34.
¶ Ib. xxviii. 24. ** Ib. xvi. 4, 5.

of success. Indeed were it otherwise we could have no ground for the exercise of faith. Faith cannot rest upon an uncertainty, or upon any less sure foundation than "the word of the Lord," which like himself, endureth for ever." The Divine Sovereignty, (to which we would bow with the most implicit and adoring subjection) is the righteous government of a God, who hears and answers prayer. We must not therefore place his sovereignty in opposition to his faithfulness. A measure of success is assured to our work. Some seed shall fall on the good ground, as well as by the way-side, or upon the stony or thorny soil.* "There shall" at least "be an *handful* of corn in the earth on the top of the mountains."† The purpose is beyond all the powers of earth and hell to defeat. "All that the Father giveth me *shall come* to me."‡ The promise is sealed to the exercise of faith, but the distribution of it *in measure* is often marked by an unsearchable, though infinitely wise and gracious, appointment.

II. In marking the specific *character of this warranted success*, we may observe that *visible success is various*. The successful dispensation of the word is not limited to the work of conversion. St. Paul seems to have fixed his heart with great intensity upon imparting to the Christians at Rome some spiritual gift "for their mutual *establishment and consolation*."§ For the same purpose, when he could no longer forbear, he sent Timotheus "to the Thessalonian Church to *establish* them, and to *comfort them* concerning their faith."‖ Where therefore the Ministry fails to convert, we may still be assured, that it

* Matt. xiii. 3—8. † Psa. lxxii. 16. ‡ John vi. 37.
§ Rom. i. 11, 12. ‖ 1 Thess. iii. 1, 2.

convinces, reproves, exhorts, enlightens, consoles, some one in some measure at all times. It never "returns to God void," when delivered in the simplicity of faith—nay even, when not preached in faith, God will not neglect to put honour upon his own word—"Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name."*

But we must remember also, that present success is not *always visible*. Mr. Scott thus encourages a clergyman from his own Ministerial experience: 'My prevalent opinion is, that you *are useful*, but do *not see* the effect. Even at Ravenstone, I remember complaining in a New-Year's sermon, that for a whole twelvemonth I had seen no fruit of my preaching; yet it appeared within the course of the next twelvemonth, that not less than ten or twelve had been brought to "consider their ways" during that discouraging year; besides others, I trust that I did not know of.'† The sick bed also, frequently brings to light much that had been effected unconsciously to us in the secret sanctuary of the heart; and much more doubtless remains for "the day to declare," which would have been disclosed as a matter of present discovery, but from a wise and tender regard to the susceptibility of our hearts to self-elevating temptations. *Ministerial success* may also be viewed, as *extending beyond present appearances*. We may be successful, even though we should not live to see it. Of the prophets of old that saying was true; "One soweth and another reapeth;" they sowed the seed and the Apostles reaped the harvest. Thus our Lord reminded them—"Other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours."

* Psalm cxxxviii. 1. † Scott's Life, p. 387.

And is it no ground of comfort, that our work may be the seed-time of a future harvest? Or, should we neglect to sow, because we may not reap the harvest? We shall share the joy of the harvest, even though we be not the immediate reapers of the field. "He that reapeth, receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal, that both he *that soweth* and he that reapeth may rejoice together."* It is sufficient encouragement to "cast our bread upon the waters," that "we shall find it *after many days*." "In the morning," as the wise man exhorts us, "sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that; or whether they both shall be alike good."†

It has been admirably observed on this subject, "In order to prevent perpetual disappointment, we must learn to extend our views. To seek for the real harvest produced by spiritual labours only in their immediate and visible results, would be not less absurd than to take our measure of infinite space from that limited prospect which the mortal eye can reach, or to estimate the never-ending ages of eternity by a transitory moment of present time—It often happens that God withholds his blessing for a moment, in order that when the net is cast in "on the right side," it may be clearly seen that "the multitude of fishes" are of the Lord's giving, lest men should attribute their success to a wrong cause, and should "sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag."‡ To the same purport Calvin

* John iv. 36, 38. † Eccles. xi. 1, 6.

‡ Bishop of Winchester on the Ministerial Character of Christ, pp. 426, 429.

remarks on the parable of the seed cast into the ground—"Christ seemeth earnestly to apply his speech to the Ministers of his word, lest they should wax old in their offices because their fruit doth not presently appear. Therefore he setteth before them the husbandmen to follow, which in hope of a time to reap do "cast the seed into the earth," and are not vexed with greediness which never is at quiet; but they go to rest, and arise again; that is, they do ordinarily apply their daily labour, and refresh themselves with their nightly rest, until the corn wax ripe at length in the due time. Therefore though the seed of the word lie hid for a time, as if it were choked or drowned, yet Christ commandeth the godly teachers to be of good comfort, lest their distrust should abate their diligence."*

We are therefore fully warranted to expect success in our ministry—not only in the way of outward reformation—but in a spiritual change of progressive and universal influence over the heart, life, and conduct. The fruit of Ministerial labour is not indeed always visible in its symptoms—nor immediate in its results. Faith and patience will be exercised—sometimes severely so. But after a pains-taking, weeping seed-time, we may expect to bring our sheaves with rejoicing, and lay them upon the altar of God, "that the offering up of them might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost."† Meanwhile we must beware of saying—"Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it."‡ The measure—the time is with the Lord. We must let him alone with his own work. Ours is the care of service—His

* Calvin on Mark iv. 26.
† Psalm cxxvi. 5, 6. Rom. xv. 16. ‡ Isa. v. 19.

is the care of success.* As "the Lord of the harvest," it is with him to determine, when, and what, and where the harvest shall be.

III. But notwithstanding this justly warranted expectation of Ministerial success, the *want of this* success is most extensively and mournfully felt. We are sometimes ready to believe, and to complain, that none labour with so little success as ourselves. Men of the world expect their fruit in some measure proportioned to their labour. Alas! with us, too often "is our strength labour and sorrow," attended under more favourable circumstances with a very scanty measure of effect; and we are compelled to realize the awful business of dealing with immortal souls, to witness them perishing under our very eye, dead to the voice of life and love, madly listening to the voice that plunges them into perdition! It may however be well to state a few of the most decisive symptoms of this Ministerial unfruitfulness. When our public services are unprofitable;† when iniquity abounds, and the mass of our people continue in an impenitent and ungodly state;‡ when there is an unconcern among us for the honour and cause of God;§ when there is a general want of appetite for the "sincere milk of the word,‖ and the public worship of the Sabbath and the weekly lecture (if there be any) are but thinly attended; when there are no instances of conversion to God in our Sunday Schools, and but few of our young people are drawn into the "ways of pleasantness and peace;" when the

* In cœlo cathedram habet, qui corda movet. Augustine.
† Isaiah lxiv. 7. Matt. xiii. 14, 15.
‡ Isa. lix. 1—15. Jer. v. xxiii. 10, &c.
§ Hag. i. 4—10. ‖ Num. xxi. 5. 2 Tim. iv. 3.

children of deceased Christian parents, instead of being added spiritually to the church, continue in and of the world;* when little or no addition† is made to the select flock who *truly* commemorate the death of their Savour in the Holy Sacrament which he has instituted for that purpose; these and similar appearances may well agitate the question of the Israelites of old with the deepest and most anxious concern—"Is the Lord among us or not?"‡ Symptoms of this dark and discouraging character loudly call for increasing earnestness of supplication. "Oh! that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence! O Lord, revive thy work!"§

Among the more general causes of this failure, we may mark the withholding of Divine influence—the enmity of the natural heart—the power of Satan—local hindrances—and the want of clearness in the Ministerial call. Each of these will now come before us.

CHAPTER II.

THE WITHHOLDING OF DIVINE INFLUENCE THE MAIN CAUSE OF THE WANT OF MINISTERIAL SUCCESS.

THERE is, as we have shewn, a warrant to indulge high expectations from the results of the Christian Ministry. And yet successive appearances, more or less prevalent in every sphere of labour, evercast these

* 2 Chron. xviii. 1. xix. 2. Ezra. ix. 2. † Acts. ii. 47.
‡ Exod. xvii. 7. § Isa. lxiv. 1. Hab. iii. 2.

bright prospects with a cloud, as if our anticipations had been heightened by a sanguine temperament beyong the level of a sober and well-grounded Scriptural basis. Much cultivation is sometimes bestowed upon the soil with little proportionate success. The same means and instruments, that had been formerly productive of important benefits, appear to fail in their accustomed effect. Now who would cultivate his lands at considerable and disappointed cost, without instituting inquiry into the causes of the failure of his just expectations? And is not the inquiry of the deepest concern to ourselves—What is wanting to give effect in our own sphere to that order of means, the power of which has been often exhibited, and which we know to be constituted in the Divine purpose for the renovation of the world? Mr. Cecil has remarked—'There is a manifest want of spiritual influence in the Ministry of the present day. I feel it in my own case, and I see it in that of others.'* This remark is fully sufficient to explain the symptoms of barrenness which prevail among us. For not more needful are the influences of heaven to fertilize the soil, and promote vegetation, than is the agency of the Spirit of God to give Divine power to the word, as the seed of spiritual life throughout the Church of God. In vain, therefore, do we plough and sow, if the Lord command the clouds that they rain no rain† upon the field of the spiritual husbandry.

Let us look at this subject as illustrated by *Scriptural* testimony. The want of effect produced by the first promulgation of the Divine will,—confirmed as it was by daily signs and wonders—is traced to this

* Cecil's Remains. † Isa. v. 6

source. "The *Lord hath not given you*," said Moses to the chosen people, "an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day."* Why did this same people refuse belief to the prophet's report at a subsequent period, but because "the arm of the Lord was not revealed?"† To this same reason was resolved their unbelief in the Ministry of the Son of God. *Therefore they could not* believe, *because that* Esaias said, "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts."‡ These statements of fact were confirmed by our Lord's express declarations. "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him—except it be given unto him of my Father."§ In every individual case he shews the dependance upon himself for spiritual life to be as entire as that of the branch upon the vine, so that "separate from him, and consequently from his influence, "we can do nothing."‖ The contrasted Scriptural examples of Ministerial success prove the same point. The Lord was with the mouth of Moses and Aaron,¶ his commissioned messengers, to qualify them for a prosperous issue of their work. Joshua was furnished with "the Spirit of wisdom."** Ezra gratefully resolved his success to "the good hand of God upon him."†† Isaiah's message was sealed by "a live coal from the altar,"‡‡ (the emblem of the purifying and powerful influence of the Spirit,) without which it would have been utterly powerless. Jeremiah's mouth was touched with the like heavenly influence.§§ Ezekiel was visited with the same indwel-

* Deut. xxix. 4. † Isa. liii. 1. ‡ John xii. 39, 40.
§ John vi. 45, 65. ‖ χωρις εμου Ib. xv. 5.
¶ Exod. iv. 12. ** Deut. xxxiv. 9.
†† Ezra vii. 9. ‡‡ Isa. vi. 6, 7. §§ Jer. i. 8, 9.

ling power.* Micah also was "full of power by the Spirit of the Lord,"† to declare his commission. The want of this influence rendered even the Ministry of our Lord comparatively inefficient. Though his doctrine was wise, loving, and pure——though his character was perfect——and though the continual presence of Almighty power attested the authority of his mission, yet little appears to have been done; while Peter, a poor fisherman, endued with this Divine influence, becomes the instrument of converting more under a single sermon, than probably his Master had done throughout the whole course of his Ministry.‡ The other apostles preached with the same "demonstration of the Spirit and power." In collective instances or in individual cases, the same power was at work. At Antioch, "*the hand of the Lord*, was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord."§ Lydia "attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul," because "*the Lord opened her heart.*"‖ Thus the uniform tenor of the sacred records marks the power of the Spirit, as the seal and confirmation to the Word, to be the standing ordinance in the church, and the sole channel of the life-giving influence, diffused through every part of the the church, from the time that the first lively

* Ezekiel ii. 2. † Micah iii. 8.

‡ Acts ii. See this accounted for, John vii. 39, and indeed promised, John xiv. 12. "I once said to myself in the foolishness of my heart, 'What sort of a sermon must that have been which was preached by St. Peter, when three thousand souls were converted at once?' What sort of sermon! Such as other sermons. There is nothing to be found in it extraordinary. The effect was not produced by his eloquence, but by the mighty power of God present with his Word. It is in vain to attend one Minister after another, and to have sermon after sermon, unless we pray that the Holy Spirit may accompany his Word.'—Cecil's Remains.

§ Acts xi. 21. ‖ Ib. xvi. 14.

stone was laid upon the foundation of God. And therefore the withholding of this influence must necessarily be attended with proportionate want of life and light, with painful symptoms of Ministerial inefficiency.

The *reason of the thing* tends to confirm this view of the subject. Admitting the Scripture statements of man's natural condition——that he is "dead in trespasses and sins"——"Having his understanding darkened"—as a "man blind from his birth"—that his mind is the very principle of enmity to the truth under the most attractive form, and his stony heart is insensible to its blessings*—how palpable is the need of divine influence! And in the want of this influence, what symptoms of life can be expected? 'Can a well-composed oration,' as Charnock asks, 'setting out all the advantages of life and health, raise a dead man, or cure a diseased body? You may as well exhort a blind man to behold the sun, and prevail as much. No man ever yet imagined that the strewing a dead body with flowers would raise it to life; no more can the urging a man spiritually dead with eloquent motives ever make him to open his eyes, and to stand upon his feet.' "The working of mighty power" is a title too high for the capacity of mere moral exhortations. A mere suasion does not confer a strength, but supposes it in a man; for he is only persuaded to use the power which he hath already.'† The clearest instructions may furnish the understanding, but they have no power to sway the will, except to what is suitable and connatural to its native

* Comp. Eph. ii. 1. iv. 18. Acts xxvi. 18. Rom. viii. 7. John iii. 19, 20, &c.

† Charnock on Regeneration. Works, vol. ii. 200.

suggestions and habits. In every case, where the gospel successfully influences the heart, it is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."*

And does not *observation and experience* add further confirmation to this subject? Do we not know instances of accomplished and devoted Ministers, who are less honoured in their work than others of their brethren of far inferior qualifications? And do we not find differences of effect under the same Ministry, and even under the same sermons, which can only be accounted for by the sovereign dispensation of Divine influence? And has not our own personal experience shewn us, that the same motives operate in the same service with very different measures of influence? And do we not realize the same difference in our Ministerial experience? Sometimes a single sentence is clothed with Almighty power—at other times it is only the feeble breath of a worm. And does not converse with our people realize the necessity of this influence to command success? 'Have you never'—Charnock again asks in his usual terseness—'discoursed with some profane loose fellow so pressingly, that he seemed to be shaken out of his excuses for his sinful course, yet not shaken out of his sin: that you might as soon have persuaded the tide at full sea to retreat, or a lion to change his nature, as have overcome him by all your arguments? So that it is not the faint breath of man, or the rational consideration of the mind, are able to do this work, without the mighty pleadings and powerful operations of that great Paraclete or Advocate, the Spirit, to alter the temper of the soul."†

* Zech. iv. 6. † Charnock on Regeneration, vol. ii. 201.

This, then, is the main source of Ministerial success. "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high,"* the wilderness, notwithstanding the most diligent cultivation, must remain a wilderness still.

Why then, it may be asked, is this *promised blessing* of spiritual influence† withheld? Let the dispensation be considered, not in the light of an arbitrary appointment, but as matter of self-inquiry. Has this influence been sought for and cherished with earnest fervency of prayer? Have spiritual "gifts within us been stirred up" by the diligent exercises of a true and active faith? Let us remember, our encouragement to prayer remains the same. God is indeed absolutely sovereign in the distribution of his blessing; but by his command to seek, he has pledged himself that we shall not seek in vain. Having freely promised, he will faithfully perform. Let all means be used in diligence, but in dependence—in self-denial, but in self-renunciation. Let not Ministers be unduly exalted among their people. We are only instruments "*by whom* they believe;"‡ and a dependence on our labour may provoke the grand Agent—who "giveth not his glory to another"—to leave our people to wither under the most effective Ministry, that these idolaters may "know that we are but men." We may be reduced to ask, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?"§ He can accomplish more by one feeble sentence from the feeblest instrument, than we can do without him by the most powerful preaching.

* Isa. xxxii. 15. † 2 Comp. Isa. xliv. 3—5. Joel ii. 28.
‡ 1 Cor. iii. 5—7. § 2 Kings ii. 14.

CHAPTER III.

THE ENMITY OF THE NATURAL HEART A MAIN CAUSE OF THE WANT OF MINISTERIAL SUCCESS.

THE office of the Christian Ministry might seem to command a successful issue of the work. It is "the Ministry of reconciliation," where the offended party stoops to make the first overtures of peace, and sends his ambassadors to "beseech by them," and pray the rebels in his stead, "be ye reconciled to God."* Such a display of disinterested condescension, infinite humility, and compassionate tenderness, might have been expected to give resistless efficacy to the message. The fruits of unmingled, everlasting love, are brought to the door of those who are most deeply interested in it, and whose need of the blessing is inexpressibly great. Now if we could conceive such a promulgation of mercy to be given to men in a guileless state of simple ignorance and urgent need, it would be most readily received, and with universal success. But here it meets with a resisting medium. The avenues of approach are barred against its entrance, and the success is limited within comparatively narrow bounds.

By the terms of the commission, it is "preached to every creature;"† but the disproportionate effect reminds us of the solemn and sententious declaration —"Many be called, but few chosen."‡ If indeed we were "as many, which corrupt the word of God" —if we would consent to lower its requisitions to a worldly standard, or to a corrupt heart, it would be

* 2 Cor. v. 18—20. † Mark xvi. 16. ‡ Matt. xx. 16.

received with cordial regard, and we should "have our reward" in the praise of men, purchased indeed at an infinite cost.* But if "as of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God, we speak in Christ,"† renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God"‡—we must not wonder to hear it once and again repeated—"I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me but evil."§ The whole course of the Ministry is a struggle against the mighty current of sin—originating in that restless bias of the natural heart, which upon the highest authority is declared to be enmity against God."‖

Nor let this hindrance to the reception of the Gospel be placed to the Minister's account. Ignorance, indiscretion, eccentricity, inconsistency, or want of conduct in his course, will indeed be *the occasion* of calling it forth. Want of conciliation and address will tend to increase it. A defective exhibition of the spirit of the cross aggravates the offence of the cross. But it must be remembered that the Ministrations of the Gospel from an angel's mouth would stir up the natural principle of degenerate man. What could be conceived more attractive than the combination of dignity, humility, patience, and love that marked the Ministry of the Son of God? Yet everywhere were his Ministrations despised and rejected. His doctrine was most offensive in its direct opposition to the natural prejudices of the unhumbled heart. His general statements were listened to with the interest

* See Gal. i. 7—10. † 2 Cor. ii. 17. ‡ Ibid. iv. 2.
§ 1 Kings xxii. 8. ‖ Rom. viii. 7.

of curiosity, and the desire of "hearing some new thing," but their personal application to the consciences of his hearers—the obligation of the reproach of the cross—the necessity of the relinquishment of all that was held dear for his service—the prostrate submission required for the reception of his truth—all combined to produce the "murmuring among themselves"—acknowledgment of the intolerable "hardness of his sayings," and the resolution to abandon their temporary profession.*

The innate opposition, existing between the substance of the Ministry and the subject contemplated within its sphere, offers therefore a material impediment to the success of this Divine institution. It addresses itself to those whose attention is already pre-occupied, whose affections have been long pre-engaged, and whose "hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." The truth therefore never comes into fair contact with a sincere and honest heart. Enmity is the concentrated essence of man's depravity. It is at once the cause and the effect of that moral or spiritual darkness, which shuts out the entrance of light, and offers difficulties to the process of "enlightening the eyes of the understanding," unconquerable by any force short of Divine influence. The power that "slays the enmity," opens the heart to the perception, obedience, and love of the truth, and to a full possession of the inestimable blessings of the Christian Ministry.

* John vi. 24—66.

CHAPTER IV.

THE POWER OF SATAN A MAIN HINDRANCE TO MINISTERIAL SUCCESS.

THE active power and unsearchable subtlety of Satan are always in operation against the Christian ministry, as the engine "mighty through God to the pulling down of his strong holds."* This is his grand point of attack upon the growing interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. It could scarcely be expected, that "the devouring lion"† would submit to have his prey wrested from his teeth, or that "the strong man armed"‡ would resign his spoils without a severe conflict.

The nature and extent of his unceasing opposition are less difficult to conceive than accurately to define. It meets us however in every sphere of operation. *In the world* his influence is palpable, in a general listless inattention to the word of God, and an immediate transition from thence into the very vortex of the world§—in the awful blindness of men to the glory of the Saviour,‖ in their thoughtless unconcern for eternity,¶ and in the captivating dominion of sin over such vast multitudes,** bringing them to the grave, unable to "deliver their souls," or to say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?"†† "The course of this world,"—or what is elsewhere called "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life"‡‡—is distinctly identified with the power of "the spirit

* 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. † 1 Peter. v. 8. ‡ Luke xi. 21, 22.
§ Matt. xiii. 19. ‖ 2 Cor. iv. 4. ¶ Luke xi. 21.
** 2 Tim. ii. 26. †† Isa. xliv. 20. ‡‡ 1 John ii. 16.

which now worketh in the children of disobedience."* We may perceive the same principle at work in the natural enmity of the heart to the followers of Christ, and the incessant malignity with which tongues, pens, and influence are employed against the cause of God. Thus are the scriptural characters of the Evil principle illustrated and sustained—as the "Prince and the God of this world,"—"the father of lies,"†—"that old serpent which deceiveth the whole world."‡

In the church of Christ—this restless enemy works his artful leaven with "all the deceivableness of unrighteousness," covering his spiritual wiles with some new and pleasing doctrines, adapted to the taste of the times; thus poisoning the bread of life by the adulteration of man's devices. His subtlety is peculiarly marked in the accommodation of the forms of deception to the different temperaments of his victims. Carnal security suits with the world, and succeeds to the utmost of his desires in keeping "his goods in peace." But such schemes would fail of their purpose under a nominal recognition of serious religion. For the church, therefore, he exhibits the attractive idol of self-righteousness; or, that most inveterate form of antichrist, the dependence on the profession of a pure doctrine—thus "transforming himself into an angel of light."§

The apostle intimates, that the general symptoms of ministerial ineffectiveness may be traced to this source.‖ And indeed we are at no loss to discover his active influence in every point of detail. The simple explanation of the growth of the tares among

* Eph. ii. 2. † Comp. Gen. iii. 15. Rev. xii. 17.
‡ John xii. 31. 2 Cor. iv. 4 John viii 44. Rev. xii. 9.
§ 2 Cor. xi. 14. ‖ 1 Thess. iii. 5.

the whole is—"An enemy hath done this."* The serpent that beguiled Eve through his subtlety"† still "corrupts" the minds of the weak and the sincere "from the simplicity that is in Christ." The Ministerial hindrances from divisions and want of love among Christian professors‡—the successful opposition that has sometimes been made to schemes of Ministerial usefulness—are traced to the secret operation of the same active cause.§ The hypocrisy of professors within the church‖—or their apostacy from her communion;¶ all the successive vicissitudes of her history, all the drawbacks to the full energies of the Christian Ministry, flow from this "fountain" of evil, which is continually "sending forth bitter waters."

Individual experience discloses the constant exercise of the same active principle. To this source the Christian traces his subtle workings of unbelief**—the wanderings of his heart in prayer††—his occasional indulgence of self-confidence,‡‡ spiritual pride,§§ and worldliness‖‖—the injection of blasphemous thoughts¶¶—the power of evil tempers***—and the general commission of sin†††—all which are positive hindrances, according to their prevalency, to the holy and blessed influence of the Gospel Ministration. The state of the world, therefore, within the sphere of the Christian ministry, exhibits the appalling conflict between the powers of darkness and light—"the god of this world blinding the eyes of them that believe not"—while the ministry of the gospel exhibits "Christ Jesus the

* Matt. xiii. 24—28. † 2 Cor. xi. 3. ‡ Ibid. ii. 10.
§ 1 Thess. ii. 18. ‖ Acts v. 1—5. ¶ Luke xxii. 3. Rev. xii. 3, 4.
** Gen. iii. 1—3. †† Job i. 6. ‡‡ 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Luke xxii. 31.
§§ 2 Cor. xii. 7. ‖‖ Matt. xxi. 23. ¶¶ Eph vi. 16.
*** Eph. iv. 27. ††† 1 John iii. 8.

Lord" as the medium, by which "God, who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, shines into the hearts" of his people with the revelation of his "glory in the face of Jesus Christ."* And thus, while the active agency of the Evil Spirit, by his direct influence, and mediate instrumental operation,† is counteracting the direct progress of our Ministry, we may be said indeed to "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, again the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."‡

CHAPTER V.

LOCAL HINDRANCES TO MINISTERIAL SUCCESS.

We have already incidentally glanced at some of the main drawbacks upon the Christian Ministry, and others in a more minute detail will hereafter come under consideration. Our present business is with those impediments to the effectiveness of the Ministry, that depend not so much upon the personal or official character of the Minister, as upon extrinsic causes, connected with the circumstances of his individual sphere. Thus a town presents many hindrances to Ministerial efficiency, which in the same degree do not belong to the superintendence of a country parish. There is often the moral impossibility of penetrating the dense mass of the population, and of insulating the several component parts, so as to bring them

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

† Homines instrumentaliter, mundus materialiter, Satanas officienter. Sclater on 1 Thess. iii. 5.

‡ Eph. vi. 12.

under the direct power of the Public or Pastoral Ministration. Hence there is a want of close dealing with individual consciences, and of that personal application of the word to the heart, which is so powerfully effective for the great purposes of the Pulpit Ministry. The course also of public instruction is necessarily of a more general complexion. The exercises of the Minister's experience may indeed give an individual caste to its character; but the want of particular acquaintance with his people must be attended with a proportioned want of adaptation of his Ministry to the specialities of their respective cases. There are also *local habits*, which tend materially to counteract the direct power of the Ministry. Large congregated bodies, (as in manufacturing districts) are in ordinary cases most corrupting pests—"hand joining in hand"—and "every man helping his neighbour" in the way of sin, and saying to his brother—"Be of good courage."* There are also hindrances of a *local character* connected *with the constitution of the Ministry*. A co-partnership in the sacred work often excites most painfully the Corinthian heresy of a party spirit among the people.—Mutual jealousies are fomented (which it is well if they do not reach the bosom of the labourers themselves)—men "are puffed up for one against another"—they learn to "glory in men"—and with all the high advantages of the most spiritual Ministration, their Ministers are constrained still to "speak unto them" not as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ "walking as men."† The *rise and progress of various heresies* may also be

* Isaiah xli. 6. † See 1 Cor. i. iii. iv.

strengthened by local combinations not immediately under Ministerial controul. The want of insight into the real state of the several departments of the flock in an extensive sphere, gives occasion for the watchful enemy to cast in his leaven, which, with a deadly influence, threatens "to leaven the whole lump." The Ministration of some of the most eminent servants of God* have suffered severely from this source. It was probably as needful a trial of faith, patience, and humility in the midst of their successful energy, as was "the thorn in the flesh" to the great Apostle, to save him from the impending danger of being "exalted above measure."†

Other hindrances also of this local character belong more immediately to the Ministry of the Establishment, and often act unfavourably even upon faithful and laborious exertions. The ground may have been pre-occupied by one or more of the organized systems of dissent, recognizing the grand principles of the Gospel, but under a form in many particulars opposed to the frame-work of our own system. This, under the most favourable circumstances, must be regarded as an evil.‡ The want of Christian unity, diminishes proportionably from the native power of the Gospel. Even if the respective Ministers are men of forbearance and brotherly love, and in the true spirit of their commission laying far more stress upon their points of agreement than upon their points of difference—it is not likely that the same spirit should universally spread through their congregations; and

* Cecil's Life of Cadogan, (Works i. 252.) Vaughan's Life of Robinson, pp. 188—195. † 2 Cor. xii. 7.

‡ See some valuable remarks on this subject by Mr. Budd, in his work on Baptism, pp. 282, 283.

the defect of this mutual forbearance, often called forth by comparative trifles, reminds us in its baneful consequences—"Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth."*

The faithful labourer may also find *many hindrances which had taken root in the soil*, before it passed under his hands for cultivation. The rank and luxuriant weed of profession may have choked the growth of much, that might otherwise have sprung up with prospect of "fruit unto perfection." He may be suffering also from the effects of prejudice superadded to the natural enmity to the Gospel, and taking its rise or occasion of excitement from the imprudence, inconsistency, or want of conduct in his predecessor.

Lay influence also, connected with the higher classes of society, often hangs a weight upon the simplicity and power of his work. The contempt of the Sabbath —the predominant character of pleasure, dissipation, and general inattention or hostility to religion in the heads of the parish, circulates with wide and most injurious effect in direct opposition to the course of the Christian Ministry. And, where the influence is of a less decided character, or even where it is exercised on the side of the Church—yet it is rarely unattended with material drawbacks. The respect for religion and for the ordinances of God does not always regulate the arrangements of the house—the general style of appearance—or the deportment of the lower members of the household. It may also be not wholly divested of a love of power; a reluctance to be controuled by spiritual restraints; or to depart from the indulgent course of neutrality, when a more

* James iii. 5.

full sway of influence on the side of the Gospel might incur inconvenience or reproach.

Now these hindrances are irrespective of personal responsibility in their origin, but most detrimental in their consequences.

It would be obviously impossible to prescribe any specific course of procedure, applicable to every form of resistance. The general principles of the Ministry well directed against the several points of attack will be of immense service in this warfare. The combined influence of the diligence of faith, "the meekness of wisdom," and "the patience of hope," will have their influence—if not in wholly counteracting the evil —yet in materially retarding its aggressive operation. Nor are the difficulties, which we have conceived to attach themselves to extensive spheres, insurmountable. Much may be done, much has been done, by the bending of general system to more minute applications. Methodized habits have been more effective under the greatest disadvantages, than a loose and undisciplined tone of Ministry, even when assisted by much local superiority. District systems of visiting, have enabled laborious ministers to pass over a wide extent of ground with far more particularity and fruitfulness. And above all, the wise superintendence of the Great Head of the Church has been signally displayed in a suitable adaptation of his chosen instruments for their specific work. Men are not all alike qualified for all situations. But "he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand,"* appoints unto each its place in the firmament of his Church—as shall be most suited to the honour of his

* Rev. ii. 1.

name—for the purpose of his will—and for the edification of his Church. The direct tendency of these circumstances must however be admitted to be unfavourable to the progress of the Christian Ministry; and the success of the work under these restraints would probably consist not so much in any *prominent* outward change in a sphere of operations, as in the silent and effectual opposition to the current of evil, in the raising up of a band of witnesses to co-operate with the Minister in his labour, and in the steady perseverance, with which the ground is maintained in the midst of conflict and discouragement.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WANT OF A DIVINE CALL A MAIN CAUSE OF FAILURE IN THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE want of Ministerial success may sometimes be traced to the very threshold of the entrance into the work. Was the call to the sacred office clear in the order of the church, and according to the will of God? This question bears with vast importance upon the subject. Where the call is manifest, the promise is assured, "Certainly I will be with thee."* But if we run unsent, our labours must prove unblest. Many, we fear, have never exercised their minds upon this inquiry. But do not we see the standing ordinance of the church written upon their unproductive Ministrations—"I sent them not, nor commanded them; *therefore they shall not profit this*

* Exod. iii. 12.

people at all, saith the Lord?"* The curse of barrenness was not, that their doctrine was unsound, but that they preached unsent.

Under the old dispensation it was marked as the most dangerous presumption to touch the ark of God without a Divine warrant. Nor is it a less direct act of usurpation to take authority in the Church of Christ without a commission from her Divine Head. Christ himself appeared with *delegated* not with *self-commissioned* authority. He declared his Divine call prophetically† upon his prospective undertaking of his work. It was manifested to the world as the preparatory step to his public Ministry, as well as in the course of his work.‡ Often did he appeal to it as the credentials of his commission.§ Those who "entered into the fold," without his authority, as the Head of the church, he stamps as "thieves and robbers," and he only who "entered in by" his Divine commission at "the door into the fold was the Shepherd of the sheep."||

'The Ministry is a matter of pure grace and favour, who then will dare to enter into it without a Divine call! There is nothing in which a king would willingly be more absolute than in the choice of his Ministers. And shall we dare to contest and take away this right from the King of kings?'¶

The different illustrations indeed of the office necessarily suppose a regular call. We cannot conceive of a herald—an ambassador—a steward—a watchman—a messenger—an angel—with self-constituted authority. The Apostle asks, with regard to the first of these characters—"How shall they preach except they be

* Jer. xxiii. 32. † Isa. xlviii. 16. lxi. 1.
‡ Matt. iii. 16, 17. also xvii. 5. John xii. 28—30.
§ John vii. 16. viii. 42. || John x. 1, 2.
¶ Quesnel on Eph. iii. 2. Col. i. 1.

sent?" They may indeed preach without a mission, but not as the messengers of God. No one can be an ambassador, except he be charged *expressly* with instructions from his Sovereign (else would he deliver what was the fruit of his own brain, not his Sovereign's will and commands.) Nor can any one legitimately come in the name of God to confirm the revelations of his will to man, except by his own express appointment. Hooker admirably observes—'They are therefore Ministers of God, not only by way of subordination, as princes and civil magistrates, whose execution of judgment and justice the supreme hand of Divine Providence doth uphold; but Ministers of God, as from whom their authority is derived, and not from men. For in that they are Christ's ambassadors and his labourers, who should give them their commission, but He, whose most inward affairs they manage?'* The Divine call is either external or internal. As external, it is manifested by a commission received from and recognized by the church, according to the Scriptural and primitive order: not indeed qualifying the Ministers, but authorizing him whom God had internally and suitably qualified. The external call communicates only official authority. The internal call conveys personal qualifications. But both these capabilities, though essentially distinct in their character, and flowing from different sources—are indispensably requisite for the exercise of the Divine commission. Both of them may be expected to unite unto the government of Him who "is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints,"† and whose unction, fitting his servants for his work, is of a rational, holy

* Hooker v. 77. † 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

and orderly character, harmoniously combining with the constituted appointment of his will. How plainly do the superscriptions of St. Paul's Epistles, (with one or two exceptions,) stamp his instructions to the churches with the seal of his Divine commission! As Quesnel observes, 'He is never weary of inculcating to us this truth, that the will of God is the sole rule of any man's call, and the only gate, by which he can enter into the Ministry. The Mission is Divine in its fountain and institution——human in its channel and way of communication.'*

We need scarcely remark that the external call—as being the mere delegation of man, though necessary and authoritative in its character—is of itself insufficient to constitute the full credentials for the sacred office. It is upon the *presumptive ground* of the inward call—the work of Divine influence—that our church delegates her authorized commission. Nothing can be more explicit than the solemn question which she has put to us. "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?' 'Certainly,' as Bishop Burnet remarks with his usual seriousness, 'the answer that is made to this ought to be well considered; for if any says, '*I trust so*,' that yet knows nothing of any such motion, and can give no account of it, he lies to the Holy Ghost, and makes his first approach to the altar with a lie in his mouth, and that not to men, but to God.'† If indeed there be any meaning in terms as illustrative of things—an inward movement by the

* Quesnel on 2 Cor. i. 1. Gal. i 1. 'In times past,' observes Luther, 'when I was but a young Divine, methought Paul did unwisely in glorying so oft of his calling in all his Epistles; but I did not understand his purpose: *For I knew not that the Ministry of God's word was so weighty a matter.*" On Gal. i. 1.

† Past. Care, chap. vi.

Holy Ghost must imply an influence of this Divine agent upon the heart. It is not indeed manifested by any enthusiastic impulse. But it enlightens and influences the heart under a deep impression of the worth of souls, and the constraining influence of the love of Christ. It directs the conscience to a deep, sober, searching self-inquiry—to a daily habit of searching the word of God, and prayer in distinct reference to this important subject, and to a careful and considerate observation of Providential circumstances, as the clear indications of the will of God.

However, 'that which no man ought to do, almost every man does, in making himself the sovereign judge of his own calling.'* Many mistakes are made from the influence of a wrong bias upon the mind—from the excitement of feeling, self-will, or adventitious circumstances. Constitutional bias, or considerations of a worldly nature, often perplex the path, and darken those tokens of the Divine guidance which faith and simplicity warrant us to expect. May a man presume that he is thus "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost" because he has had an inclination to the Ministry—or he has been educated for it——or he is thrust into it by the wishes of friends, or even by parental counsel or authority? Certainly not. Man may propose, but God must dispose; and happy that person who can say with the apostle, that it is "through the will of God," and not *through his own*, or *that of his parents*, that he is in the sacred Ministry.† Nothing could open a wider door for enthusiasm, than to suppose that an inclination or bias of the mind was a sufficient warrant for this most solemn undertaking. Motives and feelings, individual

* Quesnel on Heb. v. 4. † Ib. on 1 Cor. i. 1.

character and capacities, are so often viewed through the medium of self-love and self-complacency, that in this, as in various other matters of moment, we are reminded of the Divine aphorism—"He that trusteth to his own heart is a fool."* What would remain when the fervour of the bias had subsided, besides the melancholy exhibition of barrenness and want of furniture for the work? Nor must we admit the interference of parental influence in the choice of a work that wholly depends upon the basis of what Burnet calls 'a Divine vocation.' 'The national Church,' as has been truly and feelingly stated by one who had a deep personal interest in the subject, 'groans and bleeds from the crown of its head to the sole of its feet from the daily intrusion of unworthy men into the ministry,' from this source.† 'The will of man' must be in subserviency and submission, not in forward operation, on a point so deeply connected with the interests of the church of God, and on which the will of God makes the sole and ultimate decision.

Nor should we allow personal and consistent piety—irrespective of other considerations—to form this decision. 'No man,' indeed, as Bishop Burnet remarks, 'ought to think of this profession, unless he feels within himself a love to religion, with a zeal for it, and an internal true piety, which is chiefly kept up by secret prayer and reading the Scriptures. As long as these things are a man's burden, they are infallible indices,

* Prov. xxviii. 26.

† Life of Legh Richmond, p. 475. The whole letter is worthy the deep consideration of Christian parents in regard to the ultimate designation of their children for the Christian Ministry. The pious Quesnel puts up a prayer in reference to this deadly evil—"Lord, vouchsafe to put a stop to the torrent of this carnal love in parents. *Thou seest how thy church is almost overwhelmed with it.* On John vii. 5.

that he has no inward invocation, nor motion of the Holy Spirit to undertake it."* Yet, on the other hand, every Christian is not ordained to be a Minister. The example of Aquila and Priscilla,† and the various helpers of the primitive church called over by name in the apostolical salutations,‡ clearly prove, that an anxious concern, and a devoted application to the cause of God and of his Church, is a component part of Christian obligation, and honoured with the Divine approbation, in the ordinary walk of life. A wide field of service is opened to the Christian laity, for the exhibition of the spirit and zeal of the sacerdotal office in perfect consistency with the duties of their respective callings, and without an unauthorized intrusion upon the express commission of the sacred office. Without a Divine call, therefore, the greatest talents, the most holy spirit, and the most sincere intentions, cannot justify the entrance into the sacred office.

The two grand combining requisites for this "Divine vocation" may be determined to be, *a desire and a fitness for the office.*

I. We mark *the desire of the work* as a prominent feature in the Ministerial character and qualifications of Christ. From the beginning, while in the bosom of the Father, and in the anticipation of his ministerial work, he speaks of himself "as rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men."§ "When he cometh into the world," for the accomplishment of his work, the same earnest desire distinguished him,—"I delight to do thy will, O my God."‖ In the course of his Ministry he told his

* Burnet's Conclusion to the History of his own Times.
† Acts xviii. 25.
‡ Such as Rom. xvi. &c.
§ Prov. viii. 31.
‖ Psalm xl. 8.

disciples, that in a state of want "he had meat to eat that they knew not of:" and in explanation of his hidden meaning, he bid them understand, that his delight in his Father's work was to him "more than his necessary food."* The apostle strongly marks *the desire as* a primary Ministerial qualification—"*This is a true saying*," (his peculiar mark of emphasis, i. 15. iv. 9. 2 Tim. ii. 11.) "If a man *desire the* office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."† The apostle evidently intends to mark a *constraining* desire, an excitement much beyond that general desire to promote the glory of God, which is the predominant principle in every Christian heart; a special kindling within, concentrated in this particular point, in character, if not in intensity, like "the burning fire shut up" in the prophet's bosom, and overcoming his determination to go back from the service of his God.‡ By this sign Moses separated the Divinely-called labourers for the building of the tabernacle, "every one whose *heart stirred him up to* come unto the work to do it."§ The fire of love is that which "many waters cannot quench."‖ Its constraint overcomes all difficulties, and quickens to a readiness of mind that would appear like presumption, were it not restrained from self-confidence by an attendant sense of unfitness and unworthiness. The sense of defilement almost shuts the mouth, but the sense of mercy constrains the heart, and it "cannot stay."¶ The work of the Ministry is more desirable than the

* John iv. 32—34.

† 1 Tim. iii. 1. Ὀρέγομαι, Appeto. It signifieth an earnest desire *quasi porrectis manibus prehendere et arripere*, 1 Tim. vi. 10. Heb. xi. 16. *Quo verbo vehementior appetitus ac desiderium significatur.* Estius ad locum. Orexis apud Plinium desiderium. Leigh's Critica Sacra. κακὴ ὄρεξις ἐπιθυμεῖ. The lusting of the spirit.

‡ Comp. Jer. xx. 19.

§ Exod. xxxv 21.

‖ Cant. viii. 7.

¶ Comp. Isa. vi. 5—8

highest earthly honours: so that even under the pressure of an overwhelming sense of its difficulty it cannot be relinquished.* The desire which is evidential of a Divine call will be most enlivening in the most spiritual and humble frames, and associating the longing to communicate the blessing to others with an ardent longing to receive larger measures of reciprocal benefit.

It should also be a *considerate desire* not hastily allowed to influence the mind—but a permanent bias—the result of matured deliberate calculation of the cost. This, it is to be feared, has been sometimes lost sight of, when secular professions, (more expecially the army and navy,) have been relinquished for the service of the altar. But under few circumstances is it more important to remember the declaration—"He that believeth shall not make haste."† Waiting time is of the utmost moment to scrutinize the real principles of the heart, which have dictated an abandonment of the calling to which it was presumed that the Providence of God originally directed the decision, and in which it is the will of God in *ordinary* cases that we should "abide."‡ A departure from a former course connected with a

* It is difficult to allude to the experience of Henry Kirke White on this subject, without some feeling of regret at his (to us) premature dismission. 'Since the time I was awakened to a true sense of religion, I have always felt a strong desire to become useful in the church of Christ—a desire which has increased daily, and which it has been my supplication might be from God. It is true, before I began to be solicitous about spiritual things, I had *a wish to become a clergyman, but that was very different.* I trust I may now say, that I would be a Minister, that I may do good; and although I am sensible of the awful importance of the Pastoral charge, I *would sacrifice every thing* for it, in the hope that I should be strengthened, faithfully to discharge the duties of that sacred office. I think I have no other reason to offer but this—the hope of being an instrument in the hands of God to the promotion of his glory is my chief motive.' See his Remains.

† Isaiah xxviii. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. vii. 20.

reference to the sacred office, can never be justified *in foro conscientiæ*, or be productive of ultimate advantage either to the individual or to the Church, without the clearest light in the way of Providence—the most watchful caution against the influence of natural inclination, as the interpreter of Providence—the most earnest and persevering prayer—and the most satisfactory evidence of abstraction from all motives of personal ease, indulgence, or interest. Under these circumstances, where the call is not evidently of God, a due contemplation of the difficulties in prospect, combined with a trembling sense of his own weakness, will probably direct the mind of the candidate to some other undertaking of less cost and responsibility. This *inconsiderate desire* will gradually weaken and die away—or, if it should act presumptuously in pushing forward to the work, it will issue as has before been hinted, in bitter and unavailing fruits of repentance.*

It must also be a *disinterested* desire. Pure intention is of indispensable necessity to the meanest service in the Lord's work. Much more important therefore is it for the service of his sanctuary—that we should be divested of the selfish motives of esteem, respectability, influence, ease, worldly comfort or advantage—that we should "seek not great things for ourselves"—that we should aim at nothing but souls, rather willing to win one to Christ than a world to ourselves—and that we should exhibit a devoted consecration of all our talents to the service of God.† 'He who is called to instruct

* Matthew Henry admirably warns against intrusion into the sacred office. 'We must not,' said he, 'be *forward* to put forth ourselves in the exercise of spiritual gifts. Pride often appears in this under a pretence of a desire to be useful. If the motive be correct, it is good; *but humility will wait for a call.*' Life, p. 294.

† The following Scriptures referring to this subject may call for self-inquiry in our secret communing with our heart: 1 Sam. ii. 36,

souls,' said Bernard—'is called of God, and not by his own ambition; and what is this call, but an inward incentive of love, soliciting us to be zealous for the salvation of our brethren. So often as he, who is engaged in preaching the word, shall feel his inward man to be excited with Divine affections, so often let him assure himself that God is there, and that he is invited by him to seek the good of souls. To the same purpose Quesnel observes—'One of the most certain marks of the Divine call is, where it is the purpose of a man's heart to *live to labour and to possess nothing*, but for Jesus Christ and his Church.'* Where the heart is

Micah iii. 11. Phil. ii. 20, 21. 1 Tim. iii. 8. Tit. i. 7—11. The command of God, Jer. xlv. 5. The appeal of his faithful servants, 1 Sam. xii. 3. Acts xx. 33. 1 Thess. ii. 4—9.

* Milner's Church History, Vol. iii. 409. Quesnel on Rom. i. 1. and John x. 1, 2. Calvin gives the same view—'Est autem bonum cordis nostri testimonium, quod *neque ambitione, neque avaritia*, neque *ulla alia cupiditate*, sed sincero Dei timore, et ædificandæ Ecclesiæ studio oblatum munus recipiamus. Id quidem unicuique nostrum (ut dixi) si volumus Ministerium nostrum Deo approbare, necessarium est.' Instit. Lib. iv. c. iii. 11. Comber supposes that our Reformers had this definition in their view in framing the important question in the Ordination Service, which was written a few years after the publication of the Institutes. The most beautiful exposition of this desire was given by Philip Henry in answer to the question put to him at the time of Ordination—"As far as upon search and inquiry I can hitherto find, though there be that within me that would seek great things for myself (if indeed they were to be found in this calling), yet with my mind I seek them not. But the improvement of the talent which I have received in the service of the Gospel, for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, I hope is in my eyes. If there be any thing else, I own it not—I allow it not.—While so many "seek their own" it is my desire, and shall be my endeavour, to "seek the things of Jesus Christ."' Life, p. 34. Matthew Henry's self-inquiry at the time of Ordination was of the same excellent spirit.

"I. *What am I?* Have I been convinced of my condition and been humbled for my sin? Have I heartily given myself to Christ? Have I a real hatred for sin, and love of holiness? II. *What have I done?* Time trifled! opportunities lost! engagements broken! conversation unprofitable! forgetfulness of God and of duty! III. *From what principles do I undertake this work?* I trust from

freed from selfishness, and purely acted upon by the will of God, and the readiness of love, there is much encouragement to advance in the direction of the Christian Ministry. The importance and the purity of this desire are distinctly marked as the grand qualification to "feed the flock of God, taking the oversight thereof," not by *constraint, but willingly*; not *for filthy lucre*, but of a ready mind."* It can hardly be conceived that a Minister can have either an evidence of a Divine call, or an assurance of the Divine blessing, except he finds that he was inwardly moved to this work by an earnest desire for the honour of his God and the benefit of his fellow-sinners in it. "If I do this thing willingly," says the Apostle—"I have a reward."†—'But if you do not feel in yourselves,' as the eloquent Massillon addresses his clergy, 'a *desire* of being employed as the ambassadors of God—judge ye yourselves, *whether ye are called into the Lord's vineyard.* God implants a love in the heart for the service to which he calls; and better would it have been for you to have felt that it was not the Ministry for which you

a persuasion of the Divine Institution of the Ministry, of the necessity of a Divine call, and of my call to the work; from zeal to God, and love to precious souls. IV. *What are my ends in this work?* Not taking it as a trade to live by; not to get myself a name, or maintain a party; but aiming at the glory of God, and the good of souls. V. *What do I want?* That God would fix my heart in dedication to the work; that he would be with me at my Ordination; that he would fit me for my work with the gifts of knowledge, utterance, and prudence; and with all Ministerial graces, especially sincerity and humility; and that he would open a door of opportunity to me. VI. *What are my resolutions?* To have nothing to do with sin; to abound in gospel obedience; to consider my Ordination Vow in the employment of my talents, the maintenance of the truth, the charge of my family, the superintendence of my flock, and the endurance of opposition." Abridged from Henry's Life, p. 34—44.

* 1 Peter v. 2. † 1 Cor. ix. 17.

were intended, than that you should possess a want of inclination for the performance of its duties. *It is not necessary* that a voice from heaven should say to you in secret—"The Lord hath not sent you."—Your judgment enforced by the dictates of your conscience, tells you so.'*

II. But as was remarked—the desire alone is not satisfactory evidence of a Divine call. There must be added to it a *competent measure of Ministerial gifts.* With this our Lord was furnished as the evidence of his call, and the endowment for his work.† These were the credentials of his mission, which his own messenger exhibited in setting him forth to the people —"He, whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God; *for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.*"‡ The Apostle distinctly connects this ability with the delegation of the Ministerial commission—which he directs to be consigned not to "faithful men" generally—but to those among them "*which shall be able to teach others also.*"§ He elsewhere marks this particular among the series of Ministerial qualifications by a word which our translators have given with sufficient accuracy—"apt to teach."‖ This subject has however already come under consideration.¶ We need only therefore recommend the habit of diligent waiting upon God—with a conscientious improvement of natural capacity and all opportunities of adding to intellectual and spiritual store—and we doubt not, but the seal to the desire for the Christian Ministry will be, in most instances,

* Massill. Charges, p. 60.
† Compare Psalm xlv. 7. Isaiah xi. 2—4. xlii. 1. lxi. 1.
‡ John iii. 34. § 2 Tim. ii. 2. ‖ 1 Tim. iii. 1. 2 Tim. ii. 24. διδακτικος. ¶ Part I. chap. vi. On Ministerial qualifications.

clearly vouchsafed. But the results must not be too hastily expected—nor are they necessary to warrant a preparation or a desire for the work. But, as indispensable for an useful and edifying discharge of the Ministry, the immediate duty is to expect them in God's appointed way of diligence, prayer, simplicity, and faith.

The combination of the desire and capacity for the office, seems so important, that neither separate from the other, can be deemed sufficient. The desire for the work—though correctly answering to the standard of intensity, consideration, and purity——does not of itself attest a Divine vocation. We cannot suppose the Lord to appoint to a work without furnishing the necessary means. We cannot conceive him to send unqualified labourers, *however willing*, into his vineyard :* and none but he can qualify them. The Christian may however submit himself to the will of God, even under circumstances of disappointment to his most ardent wishes. His desires are accepted, though his services be not required.† Yet the richest furniture of Ministerial gifts, without a special desire and interest in the Ministerial work may qualify the Christian for important usefulness as a helper of the Church; but will not, I apprehend, evidence a movement by the Holy Ghost for this high and important service. The combined desire and ability appear to constitute the main feature of the inward

* In the common affairs of life it has been remarked, that "he that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool, cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage."—Prov. xxvi. 6. Could we then suppose that Divine wisdom would commit the administration of his Church to capacities wholly inadequate to the responsibility of that most important trust?

† 1 Kings viii. 18.

call, which is legitimately authorized by the representatives of the Church, and will doubtless be yet more clearly attested by the positive and beneficial influence of the Ministry upon the flock.

The view that has been taken of this subject is nearly identical with Bishop Burnet. It may be sufficient to refer to his statement; but his application is too striking to be omitted. '*This man*,' remarks the Bishop with a solemnity truly episcopal, '*and this man only—so moved and qualified, can in truth and with a good conscience* answer, that he trusts he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost. And every man that ventures on the saying it without this, is a sacrilegous profaner of the name of God, and of his Holy Spirit. He breaks in upon his church, not to feed it but to rob it; and it is certain, that he who begins with a lie may be sent by the father of lies; but *he cannot be thought to "enter in by the door," who prevaricates in the first word that he says in order to his admittance.*'*

A confirmation however of these leading features of the Ministerial call ought to be *looked for in providential circumstances*. The kingdom of Providence is 'the wheel within a wheel,' moving in harmonious conjunction but in direct subserviency to the purposes of God respecting his Church. It is reasonable, therefore, to suppose, that in his inward call to his own work, he would providentially dispose the circumstances of the individual so as to direct his thoughts, inclinations, and studies to this main end. The arrangements of his Providence ultimately decide the choice of a lawful secular calling. Much more

* Burnet's Pastoral Care, ch. vi.

clearly, therefore, may we expect him thus to mark the path on a matter so intimately connected with the interests of his own Church. Various circumstances of connections and education will subordinately tend to reflect light upon the track. The disappointment of plans previously projected for a future course in life — the unexpected and repeated closing up of worldly avenues — unlooked for openings in the Church (in the *way of usefulness, not of preferment*)— some particular crisis in the individual sphere—some control or direction of family circumstances may prove as a word behind us, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it."* The direction, however, will probably be given rather in the way of restraint than of indulgence of a constitutional propensity. A warm and sanguine temperament will often be damped, and an indolent habit shaken, by untoward tokens of Providence. Wise and tender discipline will form the submissive and teachable spirit, to discern and follow the track of the Divine guidance. The Lord usually trains his servants to waiting, and to many conflicting exercises in the way of their call to his immediate service. But in the spirit of humility, faith, and patience, their "path will be as the shining light."

The *judgment of experienced ministers* might prove of essential service in assuring the mind of the sound basis of the ministerial call, lest the desire for the work should prove rather the impulse of feeling than of principle, and lest the capacity should be the confidence of self-delusion. The late pious and learned Dr. Leland took this satisfactory view of his own case.

* Isaiah xxx. 21.

'God has been graciously pleased,' said he, 'to *give me some talents*, which seem capable of being improved to the edification of the church. He hath *disposed and inclined my heart to a willingness* to take upon me the sacred Ministry, and that not from worldly, carnal ends and views, but from a sincere intention and desire of employing the talents he has given me in promoting the salvation of souls, and serving the interests of truth, piety, and righteousness in the world. And I have been encouraged by the judgment and approbation of several learned and pious Ministers, who after a diligent course of trials, carried on for a considerable time, judged me to be properly qualified for that sacred office, and animated me to undertake it. Upon seriously weighing all these things, I cannot but think I have a clear call to the work of the Ministry, and I verily believe, that, if I rejected it, I should sin against God, grieve many of his people, counteract the designs of Divine Providence towards me, and alienate the talents he has given me to other purposes than those for which they seem to have been intended.*

But in closing our consideration of this subject, we cannot forget, that this inward call has not, in every instance, been combined with the investment of Ministerial authority. It is a painful recollection with many of us, that we entered into this sacred office with hearts unenlightened with Christian doctrine, and unimpressed with Ministerial obligations. Yet if in the remembrance of this, we "go softly all our days in the bitterness of soul;"† in humiliation, let it be not

* See Leland's Life, prefixed to his Sermons.

† See Scott's affecting reference to his own case—Force of Truth, and Practical Observations on Num. xvi. 1—19.—Also the same confession from Mr. Walker, of Truro, a minister of peculiar

in despondency—afflicted indeed for the unhallowed touch of the sacred altar, yet not "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow." Have we been subsequently directed by Divine grace to consider our ordination vows with contrition, self-abasement, and simple determination of heart? If we were not "inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost" at the time of our ordination, "do we trust that" we have been so since—that we are so now—when our work is developed before us in a new perception of its elevation and responsibility? Having received with shame and self-reproach, as it were, a second commission, are we given to this commission? Are we ready cordially and habitually to lay aside whatever is inconsistent with its high dignity and heavenly consecration, and to bow our necks cheerfully to its daily yoke of self-denial and self-devotedness? If conscience bears witnesss to a sincere love to our Master, and a desire to feed his flock, our call to the Ministerial work may well be considered to be real and evident. We may be excited with the assurance of needful direction, support, and encouragement under all our difficulties, and of a measure of Divine success according to the sovereign pleasure of God.

simplicity and most honoured devotedness to his Master's work. See his valuable collection of Tracts, entitled Practical Christianity, pp. 190, 191.

PART III.

CAUSES OF MINISTERIAL INEFFICIENCY CONNECTED WITH OUR PERSONAL CHARACTER.

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CAUSES OF MINISTERIAL INEFFICIENCY CONNECTED WITH OUR PERSONAL CHARACTER.*

THE writer is well aware of the extreme delicacy, consideration, and tenderness, which the treatment of this part of his subject requires of him. He can, however, truly state, that though for his personal profit he has diligently observed the Ministrations of his brethren, yet the material for remark which will now be detailed, is drawn rather from a painful acquaintance with his own deficiencies and temptations, than from a censorious scrutiny of others: and he trusts that it will be remembered, that there is a wide difference between exposing the defects of his brethren in the pride of self-gratulation, and between observing their failures in connection with a deep searching into his own heart, and for the purpose of bringing all into a condensed view for the common good.

The important influence, favourable or unfavourable, of our personal habits upon the Ministerial work is obvious. The character of the individual must have a prominent part in forming the minister, and therefore the causes that operate in the declension of the Christian life must have a considerable bearing upon this department of the subject. Particulars will now be specified.

* For some valuable papers on this division of our subject the reader is referred to the Christian Observer, 1822.

CHAPTER I.

WANT OF ENTIRE DEVOTEDNESS OF HEART TO THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

THE paragraph (1 Tim. iv. 13—16) condenses in the smallest compass the most important body of appropriate instruction and encouragement to Ministerial devotedness—"*Give thyself wholly to these things* that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in *doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.*" This was eminently the spirit of the Apostles—"We will *give ourselves* unto prayer and *to the Ministry of the word*,"—a resolution which exhibited the influence of Christian devotedness upon Ministerial success, in an important increase added to the Church.* The great Shepherd, indeed, who gave himself for, gave us to, the flock;† and there is no more responsible thought connected with our work, than the obligation of giving ourselves to our people, so that they shall be led to prize us as a gift from Christ. Oh! that we might be able to tell them—'We belong to Christ, and he has given us to you; we owe our whole selves entirely to you;‡ we are "your servants for Jesus' sake;"§ we have given ourselves to the work, and we desire to be in it, as if there was nothing worth living for besides: it shall form our whole pleasure and delight. We will consecrate our whole time, our whole reading, our whole mind and heart to this service.' It will not be pre-

* Acts vi. 4—7.
† Comp. Eph. iv. 8—12.
‡ Rom. i. 14.
§ 2 Cor. iv. 5.

tended that there is any favourable change since the primitive times, that render it less necessary for us than for Archippus to "take heed to the Ministry which we have received in the Lord, that we fulfil it."† Are the apostolic exhortations to unremitted diligence less applicable to us than to the beloved Timothy?† Or do we rest on the immunities of our admirable Establishment, as superseding the obligations of a Christian Ministry; as if we might "serve the Lord with that which doth cost us nothing?"‡ We are to be labourers, not loiterers, in the Lord's vineyard; not doing his work with a reluctant heart, as if we did it not—as if we feared being losers by him, or giving him more than he deserved. The pastoral dignity is the condition of a servant: it obliges a man to *devote himself entirely* to Jesus Christ and to his church. 'Both the Minister and the Ministry are only for the church. He who in this state does not apply himself entirely to the service of the church, will be treated as a thief, and a sacrilegious person. Whoever has not the spirit of his Ministry renders all the talents and advantages useless which he has received to serve the church. A pastor ought to have nothing at heart but the work of God and the salvation of souls. This ought to be his delight, his meat, and his life.§ Let us remember, that as Ministers we are not only, like our fellow Christians, "bought with a price," but we are set apart, appointed, yea devoted, to this work. As entrusted, therefore, with the Church of God, we have no right to "entangle ourselves with the affairs of this life," so as to hinder an entire consecration of our services to the cause of God. So strongly was this

* Col. iv. 17. † 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. ‡ 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.
§ Quesnel on Rom. i. 1. Eph. iii. 1. John iv. 34.

obligation felt in the primitive age, that Cyprian declares the judgment of the church to be, that a presbyter should not entangle himself with the office of an executor. If, however, they unduly elevated the standard, yet the principle was excellent—that the Minister had such constant employment in spiritual affairs, that he was not, or ought not to be, able to give the necessary attention to important secular anxieties.*

Our responsibilities demand an entire devotedness of spirit to every soul, as if it were the sole object of our care. 'It ought therefore to be our solemn and cheerful determination to refrain from studies, pursuits, and even recreations, that may not be made evidently subservient to the grand purpose of our Ministry. The Apostle would remind us, in our visits, journeys, the common intercourse of life, never to forget, not only our *Christian* but our *Ministerial* character. All must be stamped with its holiness: all must be a part of a system, strictly adhered to, of being constantly learning, and waiting the opportunity of imparting what we have learned in the things of God.'† Mr. Cecil used to say, that the devil did not care how ministers

* 2 Tim. ii. 4. Cypr. Epist. i.

† Scott's Letters and Papers, pp. 307, 308. In another place he writes to a friend in the same spirit of fervid and habitual devotedness—'My conscience is never quiet or joyful, but when I am busy in some Ministerial employment, not merely in acquiring, but in communicating the knowledge of Divine things by my tongue and pen; not only by meditation endeavouring to affect my own heart, but by some method or other endeavouring to affect others, and stir them up to seek, trust, love, and serve the Lord. And after a multitude of thoughts about pride, ambition, &c. influencing me to be active, (and they will insinuate themselves,) I am persuaded Satan would have me while away my life in inactivity under pretences of modesty, diffidence, and humility, and he never is wanting to furnish me with excuses for delaying or shifting services.'—Life, p. 213.

were employed, if it was not in *their proper work*. Whether it was hunting or sporting, cards and assemblies, writing notes upon the classics, or politics, it was all one to him. Each might please his own taste. In this view how manly was Nehemiah's answer, four times repeated, to his subtlest enemies, when they would have diverted him from the Lord's immediate service—"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."* And does not the building of the spiritual temple require the same concentrated devotedness of heart, the same sense of primary obligation? And are we, in a similar spirit, ready to answer the suggestions of a corrupt heart, of pride, indolence, love of ease, worldliness, and unbelief—I may not, I must not, I dare not, "I cannot come down?" The true spirit of our work would "let the dead bury their dead," rather than allow them to detain us from the present and imperative duty—"Go thou, and preach the gospel of God."†

Our Ordination Service distinctly marks what Bishop Burnet calls 'the great notion of the pastoral care, which runs through this whole office—that it is *to be a man's entire business*, and is to possess both his thoughts and his time.' 'What greater force or energy,'—the Bishop asks—'could be put in words, than in these? Or where could any be found, that are more weighty and more express, to show the *entire dedication of the whole man*—of his *time and labour*, and the *separating himself from all other cares, to follow this one thing with all possible application and zeal?*"‡ The clergy "have a double account to settle—an account with God, as well an account with man; and it may

* Nehemiah vi. 3, 4. † Isaiah xlv. 9. Luke ix. 59, 60.
‡ Pastoral Care, chap. vi.

happen, that although the latter party have nothing to object against them, yet their functions may not have been adequately discharged in the sight of the Great High Priest of the Church. Even if their engagement be not exactly in the nature of a conditional contract, as far as man is concerned, yet there are certain *extra-official obligations*—certain undefined, though *not the less binding, duties, which every man set apart for the Ministry has undertaken to fulfil.** His work must not be looked upon as an ordinary profession, to be conducted on that principle of reciprocity, which governs the common dealings of mankind. He desecrates his high calling, when he considers it in the light of a mere commercial transaction, in which a bargain is struck for a certain return of service upon the payment of a certain price. Like his heavenly pattern, he will be constantly about his Master's business; he will avail himself of times and seasons and topics, and present the truths of which he is the depository, in so judicious and pertinent a manner, that his "speech" may at all

* Mr. Richmond's Ministry may furnish a specimen of these undefined extra-official obligations. It consisted of two complete services on the Sabbath—together with an evening lecture for the young—Cottage lectures on Tuesday, and latterly, also, on Thursday evenings—a lecture in the church on Friday, besides weekly instruction at the work-house, and a monthly lecture before the sacrament. Combined with this system of public instruction was the constant fulfilment of the Apostolical injunction of going from house to house. See his Life, pp 114, 115, 588, 589. Many devoted Ministers would be "pressed out of measure, above strength," and would shortly "have the sentence of death, in themselves" from such incessant demands; and 'Christ,' as an excellent Minister said to his brother, 'is too great a Master to need, and too good a Master to require, his servants to kill themselves in his service.' But where health, strength, talents, and opportunities are vouchsafed, who will say that such labours are uncalled for by the exigency of the case, by the voice of conscience, by the constraining influence of our Master's love, (John xxi. 15–17.) or by the requirements of our Church in the Ordination Vow, which her Ministers have voluntarily undertaken?

times "be seasoned with salt, and that no man may be able to accuse him of neglect, or inquire, like Esau, in the tone of mingled regret and reproach—"Hast thou not a blessing for me also?"*

The devotedness of our "heavenly pattern" to this great work, furnishes a striking illustration of the true spirit of the Christian Ministry—"doing with our might." His whole soul was in it—intent upon one thing—subordinating relative obligations†—personal claims of convenience‡—and even present necessity§ to the main business. No time was wasted upon trifles. Even the common intercourse and courtesies‖ of life were made the vehicles of the most important instruction. Public occasions¶ were improved for the same blessed purpose. The thought of relinquishing his work was intolerable.** Through reproach and tribulation of the most appalling kind he persevered to the end. The labours of single days were such as are unprecedented in Ministerial annals,†† and exhibited the course of a lengthened Ministry compressed within the contracted space of three years.

In a large measure of the same spirit did the great Apostle embody the grand principles of the Christian Ministry. His very soul and spirit were set upon his work. Never did any hireling long for preferment as

* Bishop of Winchester's Ministerial Character of Christ, p. 273—275.

† Luke ii. 49. Matt. xii. 46—50. ‡ Mark vi. 34—50.

§ John iv. 6—14. ‖ Luke vii. 36—50. xi 37. xiv. 13—24.

¶ John vii. 37. ** Matt. xvi. 23.

†† Compare Mark i. 32—38. The parables, Matt. xiii. seem to have been delivered in the afternoon of a day that had been previously spent in the work of instruction. Doddridge remarks that 'no one of the prophets that we read of in the Old Testament appears to have wrought so many beneficial miracles in his whole life, as our Lord did in that one afternoon.' Family Expositor on Matt. ix. 33. Section lxxii.

did he to be made the organ of spiritual blessings* to the Church. He had a heart and tongue to speak, wherever there was an ear to hear. He was ready to preach the Gospel in the mouth of danger, even at Rome itself.† His account of one of his Ministerial courses, informs us, that he commenced his work the very "first day he came into Asia"—"publicly and from house to house"—"declaring the whole counsel of God"—"keeping back nothing that was profitable"—"warning every one night and day for three years"—outwardly exposed to the "temptations" of his enemies, and inwardly "pressed in his spirit" by a tenderness, fervour, and compassion, which could find no vent but in "tears"—and determined at whatever cost to pursue his course with undaunted perseverance.‡ Thus was he able to testify—"God is my witness, whom *I serve with my spirit* in the Gospel of his Son."§

And might we not ask, is "God our witness?" Does he mark in us—we will not say any particular frequency of preaching—but the purpose, design, and frame of heart, that stamp a faithful Ministration of the Word of God—the Spirit of a "pastor after God's own heart?"‖ A devoted Minister feels that there is suffi-

* Rom. i. 11, 12. † Rom. i. 15.

‡ Compare Acts xx. 18—36. Other courses of considerable extent are described Rom. xv. 18—28.

§ Rom. i. 9. Brainerd shows the nearest approximation to this spirit. He could scarcely give expression to the full glow of his love for his Master's work—'I longed to be'—he would sometimes say, 'as a flame of fire, continually glowing in the Divine service, preaching and building up Christ's kingdom to my latest, my dying hour.

‖ Jer. iii. 15 Let us listen to Latimer's plain and faithful exhortations. Speaking of "the Shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night," (Luke ii. 8.) he adds—'I would wish, that all clergymen, the curates, parsons, and vicars, the bishops and all other spiritual persons would learn this lesson by these poor shepherds; which is, to abide by their flock, and by

cient employment for his whole life in his sacred work. He knows also, that he can never enjoy its privileges, or rightly perform its duties, except he be wholly given to it. He will therefore find time for nothing, but what will bear with more or less direct influence upon the ultimate success of this work. Nor will he fail to find in his experience the truth of the declaration—"Them that honour me I will honour."* The want of Divine influence on our work should therefore suggest a close and searching scrutiny—Is the whole heart in singleness of purpose consecrated to the Christian Ministry? Let us listen to the encouragement of Mr. Brown's death-bed testimony on this subject—the result of forty years experience—'Oh! labour, labour,' said he to his sons, 'to win souls to Christ. I will say this for your encouragement, when the Lord led me out to be most earnest in this way, he poured in most comfort into my own heart, so that he gave me my reward in my bosom.'† To the same purport was the solemn and encouraging exhortation of the excellent Bishop Beveridge—'As for those, who come to take upon them the office of deacon,

their sheep—to tarry among them—to be careful over them—not to run hither and thither after their own pleasure, but to tarry by their benefices, and feed their sheep with the food of God's word, and to keep hospitality, and so to feed them, both soul and body. For I tell you, these poor unlearned Shepherds shall condemn many a stout and great learned clerk: for these Shepherds had but the care and charge over brute beasts, and yet were diligent to keep them and to feed them; and the others have the care over God's lambs, which he bought with the death of his Son, and yet they are so careless, so negligent, so slothful over them; yea, and the most part intendeth not to feed the sheep, but they long to be fed by the sheep: they seek only their own pass-times, they care for no more. But saith Christ to Peter—What said he? "Peter, lovest thou me?" Peter made answer, Yes. "Then feed my sheep" And so the third time he commanded Peter to feed his sheep, &c.

* 1 Sam. ii. 30. † Brown's Life and Remains, p. 267.

or priest, in the Church of Christ—let me now beseech them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose servants they are now to be, that from this day forward they look upon him as their great Master, and lay out themselves wholly in the service to which he calls them. And, whatsoever difficulties they meet with in it, let them follow the Apostle's example—faint not, nor be discouraged, but go on with cheerfulness and alacrity, as remembering that they serve the best Master in the world; one that will not only stand by them and assist them, but reward them at last with a crown of righteousness.*

CHAPTER II.

CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

As members of society some intercourse with the world is a matter of necessity. To keep no company with sinners, we "must needs go out of the world."† Connection with the world *within prescribed* limits, is also indispensable for the due discharge of our Ministerial responsibilities. We cannot instruct the subjects of our Ministry without personal contact and communication. At the same time it will be allowed to be of the utmost importance to ascertain the precise limits by which this intercourse must be bounded, and the principles on which it is to be conducted. A deviation from the straight line of scripture, a transgression of its requirements, a lowering of its standard of obligation, or a substitution of other principles in the regulation

* See his Sermon on the Institution of Ministers, quoted in Bishop Mant's notes on the Ordination Service.

† 1 Cor. v. 10.

of our conduct, must be inconsistent with our sacred obligations. Now if the Scripture prohibition of conformity to the world, and the call of God himself to "come out and be separate,"* have any meaning at all, they must be supposed to warn the Minister of the sanctuary from the sports of the field, or the chase and race course, the theatre, the ball-room, and the card-table ;† and that unprofitable, sensual life of folly, which hurries us on insensibly from the intercourse with the world to its ensnaring pleasures of sin. The tendency of such a life must operate to wean us from the spiritual employments of the Ministry, and to despoil us of all that might be pure and elevated in our views. 'A life in which the love of the world is predominant, is incompatible with that dignified and edifying piety which should be the distinguishing characteristic of the sacred Ministry. It is this spirit of piety alone that can ensure to us utility.'‡ For what aptness to teach can

* Rom. xii. 2. 2 Cor. vi. 17.

† Could Jerome, if he lived in our day, have written thus—'*Venatorem nunquam legimus sanctum?*' The following sentiments being delivered *ex cathedra*, have the weight of authority as well as of intrinsic excellence. 'To speak my sentiments plainly,' said the Bishop of Limerick at his Primary Visitation, 'I do not see how a clergyman, consistently with the sacredness and separation of his character and office; consistently with the edification of the flock committed to his charge; or consistently with the vows which he has made at his ordination, can pursue the sports of the mountain or the field; can resort to the race-ground or the theatre; can be found at the card-table or in the ball-room. In avowing these sentiments I avow the sentiments, which from the earliest ages of the church have been maintained alike by the old Catholic bishops and fathers, and by the most distinguished and illustrious churchmen of modern times.' The body of our own Ecclesiastical Law, compiled by thirty-two commissioners, in the time of Edward the Sixth, and published under his royal authority, bearing date, April, 1571, gives an accurate and elevated standard—'Non sint compotores, non aleatores, non aucupes, non venatores, non sycophantæ, non otiosi aut supini; sed sacrarum literarum studiis, et prædicationi verbi et orationibus pro Ecclesiâ ad Dominum diligenter incumbant.'

‡ Massillon.

be exercised or nourished, where the taste, time, talents and activity are devoted to engagements of a secular and self-indulgent character?

There are, however, many shades of conformity to the world, most detrimental to the spiritual influence of the Christian Ministry, and in which the Clergy of the Establishment are more especially concerned. The rank which they hold in society, their education, their mode of living, and the necessity which is commonly felt for keeping up appearances—all are circumstances, which, except under the control of a heavenly and mortified mind, will prove offences in our Ministry.* Perhaps few of us, comparatively, are aware of the keen eye with which our dress, furniture, tables, and household are scrutinized, and the minuteness of comparison which is instituted between our ministration and personal habits. Mr. Scott's observations upon this subject are entitled to great consideration. After remarking upon the inconveniences and temptations of Ministers indulging an affectation of appearance beyond their legitimate station, he adds 'If we form our judgment on this subject from the Holy Scripture, we shall not think of finding the true Ministers of Christ among the higher classes of society *in matter of external appearances or indulgence.* If a Minister thinks that the attention of the great and noble requires him to copy their expensive style of living, he grievously mistakes the matter. For this

* Jerome's Letter to Nepotian, though scanty in Christian doctrine, contains some important hints on the general subject of Clerical conduct. It may be found appended to 'Bennet's Directions for the Study of Divinity and the Articles of the Church,' 12mo 1715. An abstract also is given by Burnet, Pastoral Care, chap. iv. Professor Campbell has some forcible remarks upon the same subject—On the Pastoral Character, Sect. ii. Compare also Secker's Charges, pp. 242, 243.

will generally forfeit the opinion before entertained of his good sense and regard to propriety;* and his *official* declarations concerning the vanity of earthly things and the Christian's indifference to them, will be suspected of insincerity, while it is observed that he conforms to the world, as far or even farther, than his circumstances will admit; and thus respect will be changed into disgust.' At a later period of life he writes thus—'I am sorry to say, that worldly prudence, and the desire of making provision for families, not only for necessary things, but for *gentility and affluence*, is, in my opinion, eating up the life of spirituality, and simple trust in the Lord, even among those who preach scriptural doctrines. I believe these are *clogged in their Ministry*—nay, sink in general estimation, and are *excluded from usefulness more than they are aware of*."† Admitting even that our income allows the indulgence of expensiveness in our style of appearance, yet is it not a point of Christian forbearance to refrain? Is it not most important to show, that our heart is not set upon these things, that Christian plainness and simplicity are our deliberate choice, and that it is a matter of conscience, and of privilege, to devote to the service of God the expenditure that might have been wasted upon "ceiled houses" or other useless decorations.

A serious hindrance also to the Ministry sometimes arises from our social intercourse with our respective neighbourhoods. Not that religion inculcates any

* The Tract just alluded to may convey a useful hint for some of us. 'Facile contemnitur clericus, qui, sæpe vocatus ad prandium, ire non recusat. Nunquam pretentes, raró accipiamus rogati. Hieronym. ad Nepot. Quesnel gives the same rule on Luke xi. 37.

† Scott's Remarks on the Character of Demas, in his notes on Pilgrim's Progress. Life, pp. 396, 397. And compare also Letters and Papers, pp. 476—482. ‡ See Hag. i. 4.

breach of good breeding in a habit of moroseness, or declaiming with contemptuous severity against the follies of the world. This is neither the Spirit of the Gospel of love, nor the spirit that should distinguish its professors, and much less its Ministers; and what is said or done in this temper, had far better have been forborne, than exhibited in a garb of such unkindly roughness. Courtesy is a Christian duty,* fully consistent with the exercise of Christian faithfulness, and under the decided influence of Scriptural restraint, it may prove an effectual means of melting down prejudices, and conciliating good will. But *latet anguis in herba.* The double guard of watchfulness and prayer is most needful to preserve the single eye, and the heart devoted in the simplicity to God. It is enchanted ground. A prudent Christian dares not walk on it without a special call. The late excellent Mr. Hervey resolved—'Never to go into any company where he could not obtain access for his Master.' And at least we should determine to venture into no society but where we *sincerely desire and endeavour* to introduce our Master. There is indeed "a time of keeping silence,"† and "keeping our mouth with a bridle," in the presence of the ungodly, lest, by "giving that which is holy unto dogs, and casting our pearls before swine," we should provoke a needless excitement of enmity against the Gospel. But, as Dr. Watts has well observed—'I doubt this caution has been carried much further by our own cowardice and carnality of spirit, than David ever practised it in the thirty-ninth Psalm, or than Jesus Christ meant it in the seventh of Matthew.'‡ Certainly if we are

* 1 Peter iii. 8. † Eccles. iii. 7.
‡ Watts's humble attempt towards a revival, pp. 88, 89.

"dumb with silence, and hold our peace even from good," without feeling, like David under these circumstances, our "sorrows to be stirred,"* it is but too plain that our Christian prudence has degenerated into worldly cowardice, and that our conversation with the world has been regulated by the fear of man, fleshly indulgence, and practical unbelief of the most solemn warnings of the Gospel.† Archbishop Secker remarks, that "we are apt to fail in not always appearing, in the common course of life, sufficiently penetrated with the importance of our function, or sufficiently assiduous to promote the ends of our mission.' He warns us also, that 'talking with great earnestness about worldly affairs, or with great delight about diversions and trifles, betrays a mind over-much set upon them. Nay, our being only in a very peculiar degree good judges of such matters, or of any that are unconnected with our office, will, unless we have some special call to them, be commonly thought to imply, that we have studied and love them beyond what we ought, to the neglect of our proper business.' 'If practical Christian piety, and benevolence, with constant zeal to promote them, are not the first and chief qualities, which your parishioners and acquaintance ascribe to you; if they speak of you, as noted on other accounts, but pass over these articles, and when asked about them, be at a loss what to say, excepting possibly that they know no harm of you; all is not right, nor can such a clergy answer the design of its institution any where.'‡

Our Divine Master never intended that we should confine our religion to the services of the sanctuary.

* Psalm xxxix. 3. † Such as Mark viii. 38.
‡ Charges, pp. 229, 236, 237.

As men of a consecrated character, we should have it at heart and in hand, spreading a spiritual savour over the common walks of society, and stamping us habitually with the mark of confessors of Christ in the midst of a world, who hold him still in the same contempt, as when, eighteen centuries since, they nailed him to the cross. There must be something defective in us, except we bring an atmosphere with us, which is more or less instantaneously felt. It is the want of this high tone of character that makes our private Ministrations so pointless and ineffective. Perhaps a profitable recollection may be gathered from the diary of a late excellent Minister—'Pardon me, O Lord, that I do not meet my friends more like a Minister of Christ.'* For when parochial visits have been unaccompanied with one searching inquiry respecting the state of the soul, it is easily supposed that, as no suspicion was thrown out, none was entertained; that, if there was not quite so much religion as with some others, yet that there was no ground for alarm, and that the solemn statements of the pulpit had no specific reference to them.

The importance of studying urbanity of behaviour in our intercourse with the world, is sometimes pleaded as an excuse for avoiding that direct offence of the cross. But let it be remembered, that God never honours a compromising spirit. The character of our profession with the world must not be merely negative or inoffensive. It must be marked by a wise, tender, but unflinching exhibition of the broad line of demarcation, which, under the most favourable circumstances of mutual accommodation, still separates the world and

* Jay's Life of Winter, p. 407.

the church from real communion with each other. Did the Apostle mean by that emphatic term—"the course of this world,"* no more than the round of giddy dissipation or vicious pleasure? Had the prohibition of worldly conformity, before alluded to, no regard to the principles, the standard, the taste, the external decency of worldliness? Has not his warning against even contact with the world,† deduced as it is from the reason and fitness of things, as well as from the express declaration of God—has it not direct application to all the sources of interest, the fellowship, the habit of mind and conversation, which by the scriptural standard are proved to be—"not of the Father, but of the world?"‡ Or are an evangelical accuracy of doctrine, and correctness of deportment sufficient to stamp our profession with the broad seal of conformity to our Master's image?—"They *are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*"§ 'Doubtless,' as Archbishop Secker again reminds us—'we should endeavour to make religion agreeable; but not to make ourselves agreeable by leading our company to forget religion. We should, 'every one of us please his neighbour for his good,' but not so 'please men' as to fail in the character of "Servants of Christ."‖ We should be made in a *fitting sense and measure*, "all things to all men, that we may by all means save some;" but we shall lose ourselves, not save others, if we are quite different persons in the pulpit and out of it.'¶ These admirable sentiments fix the precise character and Scriptural limits of Christian courtesy, bounding it by the line of Christian edification, and distinguishing it by an entire disregard of our

* Eph. ii. 2.
† "Touch not the unclean thing." 2 Cor. vi. 17, with 14—16.
‡ 1 John ii. 16. § John xvii. 14, 16.
‖ Gal. i. 10. ¶ Charges, p. 235.

own interest, and a single devotedness to the main object of the salvation of immortal souls.* Indeed a successful attempt to ingratiate ourselves with the world, would rather afford matter for searching self-inquiry, than anticipation of advantage. To have been able by adventitious accomplishments to attach the world to a personal regard to ourselves, while the Master, whom we profess to venerate, is still with them a "despised and rejected" Saviour, to a considerate mind, calculating upon Scripture principles,† is a matter of far greater alarm than of self-complacency. If they could not endure the conciliating attractiveness‡ of the Son of God, even whilst devoting himself to their service at an infinite cost to himself§—if they could count the great Apostle—endued with so large a portion of his Master's loveliness of deportment—"as the filth of the earth, and the offscouring of all things,"‖ upon what principle could we be courted by them, but upon their perception of our approximation to their standard rather than to this elevated model?

This ministerial association with the world is however justified upon principle. It is said to operate beneficially as a restraint upon unbecoming conversation or dissipated recreation. It is even conceived to promise positive advantage, in recommending the cause of religion to more general acceptance. But the transgression of a plain command, having a primary reference to Ministers,¶ can be nothing less than wilful

* Compare Rom. xv. 3. 1 Cor. ix. 22. x. 33.
† See Luke vi. 26. ‡ See Matt. xi. 16, 17.
§ Compare John xv. 18, with 13, 14.
‖ Comp. 1 Cor. ix. 20—22, with 1 Cor. iv. 13.
¶ The reference 2 Cor. vi. 17 is to Isaiah lii. 11—a prophetic address to the Ministers of the sanctuary on their return from Babylon, though subsequently extended under the sanction of infallible authority, as a general rule of conduct under the Christian

sin:* while the motive, pleaded in its extenuation, marks the character of the sin, to be "doing evil that good may come." It must be obvious, that the best-intended motives can never justify the infringement of a Divine obligation, even if (what in the present case is contrary to fact and experience) the prospect of eventual benefit were both assured and satisfactory. But it is well known that the awe and restraint of the Ministerial presence cannot reach to the root of the evil. Its temporary and inefficient influence therefore has been dearly purchased by a lowering of the tone of the Ministerial character, by a yielding conformity to the tastes, habits, and conversation of the world, and by a virtual sanction of a defective and erroneous standard of conduct.† Would the Levitical high-priests have descended from their sacred elevation of immediate intercourse with God, to participate in the frivolities of sober and decorous worldliness? And why should our character, under a more elevating dispensation, be less separate, or our standard less heavenly? If indeed this connexion with the world should recommend ourselves to their kindly consideration, yet no additional regard to our

dispensation. Poli Synopsis, in Isaiah lii. 11, and comp. Ezra viii. 24—30.

* 1 John iii. 4.

† 'I fell into a mistake, when a young man,' observes Mr. Cecil, 'in thinking that I could talk to men of the world on their own ground, and could thus win them over to mine. I was fond of painting, and so I talked with them on that subject. This pleased them: but I did not consider that I gave a consequence to their pursuits which did not belong to them; whereas I ought to have endeavoured to raise them above these, that they might engage in higher. I did not see this at the time; *but I now see it to have been a great error.*' Cecil's Remains, a work abounding with most important thoughts upon the subject of the Christian Ministry. 'That man is mistaken,' observes Quesnel, 'who thinks to prevail upon the world by conforming himself to its fashions and manners. The world will much sooner corrupt the heart which opens itself thereto.' On Matt. xi. 8.

Master accrues from it, as we have usually been unable to mention his name with any glow of interest, nor has any feature of his holy character been illustrated or embodied in the spirituality of our conversation. Massillon warned his clergy most pointedly against this species of self-indulgent delusion.—'We often,' as he observes—'persuade ourselves that we ought to adopt or acquiesce in the taste, the language, and the manners of the world, that we may not be unacceptable companions; but when the world courts, adopts, and is delighted with a Minister of the Gospel, *that Pastor gives a decisive proof*, that he ceases to regard the decorum of his station, and the respectability of his character. "If ye were of the world"—said our Lord to his disciples—"the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." No, my brethren, the *world does not run after a holy and respectable Pastor. Let us not deceive ourselves.* To purchase the friendship and esteem of the world, we must sacrifice a certain part of the dignity and gravity of our Ministry. *The world does not give up in the smallest degree its baneful prejudices and dangerous maxims, in order to unite itself with us. No! we must give up our consistency of character, to be admitted into its societies.*'*

It is allowed indeed, that our Divine Master occasionally associated with men, whose profession was decidedly adverse to his doctrine. But he could breathe a polluted atmosphere with perfect security, and therefore might venture, where the dictates of common prudence would forbid those to follow, whose constitutions are pre-disposed to contagion. Besides, his intercourse with the world was uniformly that of an Instructor not

* Charges.

of a Conformist; and he accomplished his important designs, not by accommodating his conversational subjects to their taste (except indeed by illustrating his system of doctrine from the topics and circumstances of the day), but by chaining down their wondering attention to "the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth."* But is our intercourse with the world thus conformed to our Master's pattern? Are we ready to do "the hard and rough work of bringing God into his own world?"† Or are we not too easily satisfied with the influence of outward restraints, while no plain testimony has been delivered for him, "whose we are, and whom we profess to "serve?" It has been justly remarked, that "a worldly state of mind is not less destructive of true holiness than gross sin."‡ The example of Demas, the fellow-labourer of the Apostle, stands as a beacon at the close of the Ministerial Epistles, to remind us, while excited in our course by the glorious prospects of eternity,§ of the need of watchful carefulness against this baneful snare of our Ministry.‖

* Compare p. 147.

† Cecil's Remains. 'Examine when you mix with the world, if duty calls you—if it is for the good of men, and the glory of God—if it is his work you are going to do? Look up, and you will find, it was so with your Master. If he manifested himself in a village of Jewry, it was to do the work of his Father; if at a marriage, it was to show his power, and to command authority to his doctrine; if in the house of a publican, it was to save a child of Abraham; if at Jerusalem on the feast day, it was to purge the temple.' Massillon.

‡ Bishop of Winchester's Ministerial Character of Christ, p. 175. 'Consider this also—*which is a great truth*—that every degree of love to the world is so much taken from the love of God.' Bishop Taylor's Advice to his Clergy.

§ Compare 2 Tim. iv. 10. with verses 6—8.

‖ Not wishing to interrupt the direct line of argument in the text—we throw into the form of a note the suggestion, applying as decidedly to Dissenting Ministers as to the Established Clergy—whether an engrossing interest in *worldly politics* does not sometimes operate unfavourably upon the spirituality of Christian

Upon the full consideration of the subject the writer feels constrained to express his decided conviction, that a very considerable proportion of Ministerial inefficiency may be traced to the source of worldly conformity. This needs no proof in the too frequent cases of decided love of pleasure and dissipation. 'For,' as Massillon asks his clergy—'after having fully mixed in the diversions and follies of the world, can you appear in a Christian pulpit, impressed with a sense of the importance of the Gospel and zealous for its success.' Of such Ministers we would desire to speak "even weeping," that they are the sores of the church—that they have given more strength to the cause of schism, than the most powerful objections either to our established formularies or government—and what is far more fearful—that they are charged with the awful responsibility of dragging with them immortal souls down to perdition by their negligence, or by the positive influence of their example.

But is not also the lax, indulgent approximation to

Ministrations? '*Politics and party*'—Bishop Burnet observed of his day—'eat out among us, not only study and learning; but that which is the only thing that is more valuable—*a true sense of religion*, with *a sincere zeal* in advancing that for which the Son of God lived and died, and to which those who are received into holy orders have vowed to dedicate their lives and labours.'—These remarks—important in themselves—derive additional weight from being found in the preface to the last edition of the Pastoral Care, written only three years before the Bishop's death, when we may hope that the remembrance of his own course, (far too political for the sanctity of his office) suggested the caution. It is not meant that the Clergy should neglect the exercise of their civil privileges, or the enforcement of civil obligations. But surely the Minister of a "kingdom not of this world" ought to be ready to say of his own interest in the politics of this world—"Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth." The more we are of politicians, and party men, the less we are of Ministers, and the less of unction, fruitfulness, and comfort will be found in our work.—See some useful hints to Ministers in Scott's Life, pp. 306, 307.

the spirit of the world—either in our general habit and appearance—or in our intercourse with the world—a leading, though not always tangible, cause of Ministerial failure? Even the faithful exhibition of the cross must be materially weakened by a want of the corresponding exhibition of its power, in crucifying its Ministers to the lusts and affections of the world. A connexion with the world beyond the point of clear duty, (or even within these narrow bounds, without a heavenly temper) must bring us into a worldly atmosphere, which deadens the vigorous actings of a spiritual life, till, like the torpedo, we benumb every thing we touch. Conscience in a tender and susceptible state, might almost determine the question—What is the effect of such connexions upon the spiritual frame? Has there not been in this atmosphere a closer communion with the world than with God? Has not the spirit of prayer been well-nigh extinguished, and delight in *the more spiritual exercises* of our work fearfully lost? And does not our Ministry thus become (perhaps unconsciously to ourselves) weak, general, and indefinite upon the main point of separation from the world. Or even, should our exhortations reach the full scriptural standard of decision, must not their power be wholly counteracted by this compromising spirit of the world?

Scriptural and earnest statements of truth, combined with sociable conformity to the world, will give no offence, and bring no conviction.* Cowper's line—'If

* The "way is still narrow," and "the gate is" yet "strait.' The world will allow us to say this officially, to read it in the lesson of the day, and to amplify the solemn saying in a sermon. But if we *mean* what we preach, and awaken men's belief of our sincerity in the interval between one Sunday and another, then begins the debate between a Minister and his flock. So long as he is not missing in the circles of pleasure, he may deliver without suspicion

parsons fiddle, why mayn't laymen dance,'—has at least as much truth as wit in it. If we go one step into the world, our flock will take the sanction to go two; the third will be still more easy, and the atmosphere more enticing, till at last it proves, "as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life."*—"The Minister, therefore, who would not have his people give into worldly conformity such as he disapproves, must keep at a considerable distance himself. If he walks near the brink, others will fall down the precipices."† "A preacher," remarks a beautiful expositor, "who enjoys the smiles of the world, can hope for little success from God;" but "a Minister of the Church, who is entirely disengaged from the love of earthly things, is a great treasure, and a great 'consolation' to her."‡

CHAPTER III.

THE FEAR OF MAN.

WHAT conscientious Minister is not reminded of the truth of the Divine aphorism—"The fear of man bringeth a snare?"§ Perhaps no Ministerial temptation is more specious in its character, or more subtle and diversified in its operation. Its connexion with worldly

the most fearful warnings of God against a slumbering world; and none will molest him. But the moment his own example comes in aid of his doctrine, and irritates the consciences of those around, his creed is discovered to be false and foolish."—Antichrist. By Rev. J. Riland. pp. 49, 50.

* Prov. vii. 23. † Scott's Life, p. 122.

‡ Quesnel on 1 Cor. ii. 3. Acts iv. 36. See some striking thoughts on the subject of this Section, in Rev. D. Wilson's Prefatory Essay to Baxter's Reformed Pastor, p. liii.

§ Prov. xxix. 25.

conformity is sufficiently evident from the recollection how often is Christian boldness paralyzed from this source. Mr. Scott in the early part of his Ministry, appears to have suffered severely from the power of this temptation; and there are few of us of Lavater's self-observant stamp, but will have some sympathy in his graphical delineation of his difficulties—'This,' he observes, 'is the last victory the Christian gains—Here I find my own deficiency, as much or more than in any other respect: and often I feel an inward timidity, when about to preach upon an unpopular doctrine, or expose a foible, which some one of my congregation, whom I otherwise love and esteem, is remarkable for; and in every instance I feel the greatest reluctancy to resign the good opinion, or act contrary to the judgment of those for whom I have esteem. It is true, I am peculiarly bound to strive against this by reason of my Ministerial office. I am to speak boldly, "not as a man-pleaser, but as the servant of God"—and therefore I endeavour to master all these fears, to act implicitly as my conscience suggests, without respect of persons. Conformity to others in things unchristian, the fear of man, a servile spirit of time-serving, &c. are the faults of Ministers, *and effectually hinder even those* that desire it from performing the most important parts of their Ministry, both in public preaching, and by private application. But this kind of spirit goeth not out but by a very spiritual and devout course of life. Indeed its expulsion is the gift of God, and is especially to be sought for from him."*

* Scott's Life, pp. 117, 118. The Apostle appears to intimate the power of this Ministerial hindrance in exhorting Timothy to "stir up all his gifts" of "power, love, and of a sound mind" (which—and not "the *spirit of fear*" had been given him by the imposition of hands) to resist its influence. 2 Tim. i. 6—8.

Our public Ministrations are continually infested by this snare. Our conviction of duty is often nearly sacrificed to it. Subjects uncongenial to the taste and habits of influential men in our congregation are passed by, or held back from their just and offensive prominence, or touched with the tenderest scrupulosity, or expanded with wide and undefined generalities—so that the sermons (like letters put into the post-office without a direction) are addressed to no one—No one owns them. No one feels any personal interest in their contents. A Minister under this deteriorating influence will be chiefly exercised in general truths devoid of particular application—more in what is pleasing than what is direct and useful. Many other subjects may be equally necessary, or indeed more important, but these are more conciliating. There is thus a continual conflict between conscience and the world—'I ought to speak for conscience sake; but I dare not speak for fear of the world.' The offensive truth must be smoothed, disguised, and intermixed, until it is attenuated into an insipid, pointless, and inoperative statement. The spirit of cold refinement which gives occasion to this compromising Ministration, is one of the most baneful hindrances to the efficacy of our work. Whether in or out of the Church it is the real spirit of the world. It will tolerate and even approve a modified system of Evangelical truth, while the entire and unflinching presentment of the Gospel in its native simplicity and spirituality is unacceptable. Mr. Cecil remarks—'There is too much of a low, managing, contriving, manœuvering temper of mind, among us. We are laying ourselves out, more than is expedient, to meet one man's taste, and another man's prejudice. The Ministry is a grand and holy affair; and it should find in us a

simple habit of spirit, and a holy but humble indifference to all consequences.'*

Our general course of Ministration is also 'sore let, and hindered' by the operation of this principle. Indeed there is no end to the subterfuges of cowardice and self-deception, when "the wisdom of this world" has begun to prevail against the simplicity of faith.—How seldom do the rich and poor share alike in the faithfulness of Ministerial reproof? How hard is it, instead of "receiving honour one of another," to "seek the honour that cometh from God only!"† How ready are we to listen to cautions from influential quarters against excessive zeal! How much more afraid are we of others going too far, than of coming short ourselves of the full requisitions of the Scriptural standard! How many are the cases of conviction, where the "light is hid under a bushel," or exhibited only to the friends of the Gospel! How many shrink from "witnessing a good confession," excepting under the shelter of some great name! How often are opportunities of usefulness neglected! and the "endurance of afflictions" in "making full proof of our Ministry"‡ avoided from the fear of the cross! We cannot—we say—do all at once—We hope to gain our point by little and little—We dare not therefore, by taking a bold step upon the impulse of the moment, close the avenues of distant and important advantage. But does our conscience

* Cecil's Remains. Luther's rule was—'When one cometh into the pulpit, he is much perplexed to see so many heads before him; when I stand there, I look upon none, but imagine they are all blocks that are before me.' Table Talk, chap. 22.

† John v. 44. 'A man sometimes suffers himsel to be lulled asleep by the agreeable noise of a flattering world, which praises a Pastor for performing one half of his duty, while God condemns him for the neglect of the other.' Quesnel on 2 Tim. iv. 5.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 5.

clear us of a desire to follow our Master without taking up *the daily cross?*" Are we not afraid of "being fools for Christ's sake?" Do we not sometimes "become all things to all men" when we ought to remember that "if we yet please men, we cannot be the servants of Christ."* Christian prudence indeed is a most valuable grace in its own place, connexion, and measure, and the want of it has often brought with it great inconvenience. But except it be the distinct exercise of the principle of faith, combined with boldness, and encircled with a warm atmosphere of Christian love,† it is likely to sink its proper character and office under the influence of a degenerate spirit of the world. "The fear of man" often assumes the name of prudence, while a worldly spirit of unbelief is the dominant, though disguised principle. It operates also in the selection of society—often leading the undecided to prefer association with their brethren of a lower standard—or even with the world—rather than with those who bear the mark of the cross upon their Ministry.

But *the fear of the professing Church* is also a serious part of this temptation. We are afraid to exhibit the doctrines of grace in their fulness and prominence, lest we should be thought unmindful of the enforcement of practical obligation. The freeness of the Gospel invitations, and the unreserved display of Evangelical privileges, is often fettered by the apprehension of giving indulgence to Antinomian licentiousness. The detailed exposition of relative duties is partially withheld from the fear of the imputation of legality. What further

* Gal. i. 10. 'How sweet is it to have this testimony in our conscience, that one has not been afraid of men, when it was necessary to serve God.' Quesnel on 1 Thess. ii. 2.

† Compare 2 Tim. i. 7.

proof is needed to illustrate the retarding influence of this temptation upon the progress of our Ministry, than the recollection of two Apostles, beguiled for a short moment under its influence to deny the faith of the Gospel?* "With me"—said another Apostle to his people (whose determined resistance to the weakness of his brethren was the honoured means of their restoration) "it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment. He that judgeth me is the Lord."† Where however the truth is thus "imprisoned," if not "in unrighteousness,"‡ yet in unbelief —there must be a want of power upon our Ministration. The direct violation of Christian integrity has a necessary tendency to enfeeble exertion—by diverting our mind from the main object, which should be always present, always acting supremely in the direction of our labour and time to the promotion of it, and compared with which every thing else is utterly unimportant—the edification, and salvation of our people. The voice of conscience and of duty speaks with a weaker tone in a worldly atmosphere. The habits of self-indulgence are strengthened, and the exercises of self-denial proportionably diminished in frequency and effectiveness. Thus as the heart is more in the world, it is less in our work, and as the natural consequence, our duties are reluctantly performed, and unproductive in their results. Well-intentioned imprudence is far better than the frigid wisdom of this world, and it will invariably be found that those that act openly with an honest freedom, though they may probably commit mistakes, will be generally borne out, and find their path ultimately smoothed; while the

* Gal. ii. 11—14. † 1 Cor. iv. 3. ‡ Rom. i. 18 in the Greek.

temporizing spirit, that aims to please God and man together, will meet with disappointment from both. Where God is not honoured, he will not honour. And in defect of that Christian boldness that becomes our Master's cause, our people under the influence of our example will sink into the same benumbed spirit, while their confidence in us will be materially weakened by the manifest evidence of our Ministerial inefficiency and unfruitfulness.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WANT OF CHRISTIAN SELF-DENIAL.

It may be generally remarked, that unless the Ministry exhibit the self-denying character of the cross of Christ, it is the Christian Ministry in the letter only, not in the spirit; it is not the work that God has engaged to bless. The motives to this Ministerial principle are indeed in themselves so operative, that, were it not for the strong current of counteracting influence, they would be found irresistible. The impressive solemnity of Ordination—in which we voluntarily bound ourselves to '*lay aside the study of the world and the flesh*'* —might be thought to give at the very outset an impulse, sufficiently powerful to carry us on through a course

* Exhortation in the Ordination of Priests: that is, as Archbishop Secker expounds it—'not making either gross pleasures, or more refined amusements—even literary ones unconnected with your profession—or power, or profit, or advancement, or applause, your great aim in life; but labouring chiefly to qualify yourselves for doing good to the souls of men, and applying carefully to that purpose whatever qualifications you attain.'—Instructions to Candidates for Orders, appended to his Charges.

of habitual and necessary self-denial in the consecration of ourselves to the service of God. But the Christian principle has a continual struggle to maintain with natural self-indulgence—the influence of old habits—perhaps the habits of our former unconverted state—all combining to lower the standard of exertion from the Scriptural mark. The cultivation, therefore, and renewal of *the habit of self-denial* are the springs of the most beneficial Ministerial activity; and the want, or the enervation of this habit will ever be found to relax the whole system of our motives and encouragements. Archbishop Leighton admirably sets forth John the Baptist as an example of the spirit and temper of Ministers of the gospel—'to live as much as may be in their condition and station disengaged from the world—not following the vain delights and ways of it—not bathing in the solaces and pleasures of earth, and entangling themselves in the care of it; but *sober and modest, and mortified in their way of living*; making it *their main business not to please the flesh*, but to do service to their Lord, to walk in his ways, and prepare his way for him in the hearts of his people.* The Apostle sets before us the habitual temperance of the wrestler, as the illustration of his own Ministerial exercises, and as the appointed mean of preserving his Christian stedfastness;† the necessity for which was in no respect diminished by his high attainments in the Christian life. The missionary Eliot is said to have 'become so nailed to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the grandeurs of this world were unto him just what they would be to a dying man. He persecuted the lust of the flesh with a continual antipathy; and

* Lectures on Matt. iii. Works, vol. iii. 25.
† 1 Cor. ix. 25—27.

when he has thought that a minister had made much of himself, he has gone to him with that speech—'Study mortification, brother, study mortification."* His biographer, in the same spirit, on his entrance on the Ministry, having met with the important remark—'that the want of mortification in a Minister is very often the cause of the unsuccessfulness of his Ministry,' resolved to read over Dr. Owen's valuable Treatise on Mortification, with some other books for instruction and direction on the same subject.† Henry Martyn appears to have deeply felt the incalculable value of Christian self-denial in the work of the Ministry—'A despicable indulgence in lying in bed,' he writes soon after his Ordination, 'gave me such a view of the softness of my character, that I resolved on my knees to lead a life of more self-denial; *the tone and vigour of my mind rose rapidly; all those duties, from which I usually shrink, seemed recreations.* I collected all the passages from the four gospels that had any reference to this subject. It is one on which I need to preach to myself, and mean to preach to others.'‡ We might indeed apply the apostle's remark on a subject not wholly dissimilar—"If a man know not how to rule *his own*" *self*, "how shall he take care of the church of God?"§ The fidelity he owes to God requires the abridgment or relinquishment of whatever is inconsistent with his double obligation of "giving himself continually to prayer and to the Ministry of the word." He may

* Mather's Life of Eliot.

† Life of Cotton Mather, by his son. An excellent abridgment of which may be found among a valuable system of Christian Biography, now publishing by the Religious Tract Society. See some valuable hints on the subject of Christian Mortification, in the Life of Owen Stockton, republished in the same series.

‡ Martyn's Life, p. 68. § 1 Tim. iii. 5.

"escape" indeed, "the pollutions that are in the world through lust," but the subtle operation of indolence, the indulgence of levity in manners or conversation, still besets him, even in the society of religious professors, with an influence as injurious as worldly dissipation. It was a most important remark of Œcolampadius, animadverting, in his celebrated Epistle to the Waldenses, upon the injunction of the celibacy of priests: 'It is not marriage that spoils priests, but *sloth, self-indulgence, and the fear of the cross.*'*—But the general habit of self-denial in its application to the wide subject of the Ministry will admit of more detailed illustration.

It should be visible in *our manners and communication with our people.* The ordinary remove of a young Minister from the University to a country parish brings him into a new world. His intercourse, hitherto conducted with men on his own level—men of good breeding, education, and intelligence, must now be exchanged for contact with the lower department of society, unfurnished in their minds, and engaged in pursuits utterly uncongenial with taste and refinement. Nor is he at liberty (as in the common walks of life) to decline their intercourse. He has bound himself to them by the deepest responsibility to live for them and with them, on terms not only of consideration and respect, but of mutual confidence and love. Now his obvious duty of "condescending to men of low estate" must be formed upon the basis of self-denial. He must

* Scott's Continuation of Milner, vol. i. 147. Dr. Watts's caution will explain this remark with valuable minuteness: 'Guard,' says he to his young Minister, 'against a love of pleasure, a sensual temper, an indulgence of appetite, an excessive relish of wine or dainties; this carnalizes the soul, and gives occasion to the world to reproach but too justly.—Humble Attempt, pp. 80, 81.

acquaint himself with their manners, their modes of thinking and expression, and their connexions with one another, in order to bring them under the direct and immediate influence of an effective Ministration. The dignified condescension of our Divine Master's Ministry furnishes the best pattern for his servants. He "spake the words unto" the people, not as in his infinite wisdom he was able to speak it, but as they in their infantine state of intelligence "were able to hear it:"* and he invited them to "learn of him," in the assurance, that he was "meek and lowly in heart."† The want of conformity to this pattern shuts up the avenues of confidence, and consequently prospects of success. It gives a force of repulsion rather than of attraction to Ministerial intercourse. The "rough places," instead of being "made smooth," are made more rough and impervious.

The exercise of Christian self-denial will be called for in *the duties of the Ministry*. Our labour will be often demanded with considerable sacrifice of personal inconvenience. Thus it was with our Master. His food and rest was even foregone or forgotten in the immediate pressure.‡ Seasons of necessary retirement were interrupted without an upbraiding word.§ Hunger, thirst, cold, or fatigue set no bounds to the determined forgetfulness of himself in his Father's work. But should we be ready for the exercise of self-denial in giving up our ease, convenience, or comfort, for our people's sake—when called, for instance, from an hour of legitimate indulgence to the visitations of the sick? It was said of Mr. Grimshawe, (could it be said of many of us?)

* Mark iv. 33. † Matt. xi. 29.
‡ Compare John iv. 6, 31—34.
§ Compare Mark i. 35—38. vi. 31—34.

that 'night and day were the same to him, when he was desired to visit the sick. He has been known to *walk several miles in the night, in storms of snow,* when *few people would venture out of their doors, to visit a sick person.*'* In *the work of instruction* the calls of our people will often give unseasonable interruption to our studies. There will be much to bear from their ignorance, weakness, and sometimes from their impertinence. Watchfulness will be needed against the appearance of harshness or petulance, which might "turn the lame and diseased out of the way" when "rather it ought to be healed."† There is also the imperceptibly growing tendency of old age to abated vigour and activity, which brings a chilling frost or damp upon Christian Ministrations, and in every way gives advantage to the ever-watchful enemy to counteract or paralyze a course of usefulness by sowing the seeds of division. Massillon speaks to this point with much impressiveness—'Never, says he, 'consider your Ministry at any period of it, as a situation of honourable repose. Think *not of appropriating any time to yourself, if you can by a different application of it, preserve only one soul from perdition.* Content not yourselves with going through your public and ordinary duties, after which we are ready to persuade ourselves, that we are discharged from every other. Let not age itself, let not the long and active discharge of your Ministerial avocations, in which you have grown old, suggest to you a legitimate reason for ceasing from the combat, and of at length enjoying the repose, to which, after so many years of labour, you may seem to

* Newton's Life of Grimshawe, p. 102. For parallel Illustrations of Ministerial self-denial, compare "Memoirs of Oberlin," p. 216.

† Heb. xii. 13.

be entitled. Rather let your "youth be renewed like the eagle." Zeal may supply powers, which nature may in appearance refuse. These precious remains of decay are honourable to the Ministry. Let not old age become a motive to any indulgence, which may not be strictly consistent at the close of a life dedicated to the discharge of the pastoral obligations. Continue to abound in the work of the Lord.'*

This principle of self-denial must also controul and direct our *Ministerial study*. The importance of the habit of study has been already noticed.† But no less important is the controul to be exercised over it. The education of clergymen being of a literary character, 'it will easily be perceived, that an ardour for extra-professional studies is a temptation exactly fitted to their situation or previously formed habits, and one by which they are more likely to be seduced, than by others of a less specious appearance.' And thus 'the literary pursuits of a Minister will in many cases afford a strong evidence of his religious character. Secular studies, however congenial to a person's taste, or necessary for his recreation, cannot possibly be the *chief object* of any Minister, who is conscientiously devoted to his pastoral engagement.'‡ These remarks place the subject in a just light. The usefulness of these studies entirely depends upon their subordination to the main purpose. Holding the principal place, they would tend to secularize our spirits, to engross our time, and to divert

* Charges, pp. 122, 123. It was a frequent and important petition of Mr. Whitfield, 'that the Lord would keep me from growing slack in the latter stages of my journey.' Mr. Scott alludes to his own need of this petition. (Life, p. 280.) But who does not need it in reference to the *early* as well as 'the latter stages of the journey?'

† Part I Chap vii. Sect. I.

‡ Wilks's Essay on Signs of Conversion or Unconversion in Christian Ministers, p. 45.

our attention from a primary regard to the state of our people, who always need our superintendence, and in the lack of this service are in danger of perishing in ignorance and sin. 'The vows of God,' as Mr. Scott reminds us, 'are upon us.' All our reading ought to be subservient to the immediate object of instruction. We may read any books, ancient or modern, sacred or profane, infidel, heretical, or what not; *but always as Ministers*, to note such things, as may the better enable us to defend and plead for "the truth as it is in Jesus;" never merely for amusement or curiosity, or love of learning, simply for its own sake, or for the credit or advantages derived from it.'*

No one attains remarkable eminence or success, without a resolute and habitual self-denial in subordinating every secondary point to the favourite object. Perhaps the highest praise for a Minister of the Gospel was given by Dr. Johnson, in his life of Dr. Watts, when he remarked of the subject of his biography, that, 'whatever he took in hand, was, by his incessant solicitude for souls, converted to theology.' And indeed this determined singleness of purpose is indispensable to a conscientious discharge of Ministerial

* Scott's Letters and Papers, pp. 309, 310. 'I carried along with me,' said the excellent Sir M. Hale, 'in all my studies this great design, namely, of improving them and the knowledge acquired by them for the honour of God's name, and the greater discovery of his wisdom, power, and truth; and so translated my secular learning into an improvement of Divine knowledge. And had I not practised this design in my acquests of human learning, I had concluded my time mis-spent; because I ever thought it unworthy of a man that had an everlasting soul, to furnish it only with such learning, as either would die with his body, and so become unuseful for his everlasting state, or that in the next moment after death would be removed without labour or toil in this life.' Judge Hale's account of the Good Steward. Many of us might profitably sit at the feet of this distinguished Christian layman.

obligations. How fearful would be the responsibility of a soul passing into eternity unregarded and uninstructed, while our minds were engaged in some pursuit of literature, taste, accomplishment, or even abstract theology. How self-convicting would be the confession, "*While thy servant was busy here and there, the man was gone.** It is always dangerous to prefer the indulgence of study to the active exercises of the Ministry, or at least to 'Give ourselves wholly to reading,' so as to neglect the work of pastoral instruction.† Many such avocations are legitimate in their character, but criminal in their indulgence. An engrossing attachment, preventing an entire self-devotedness of heart, though less scandalous, may prove eventually little less prejudicial to our Ministry, than the love of money or of pleasure in its most palpable forms. And therefore 'as to the waters which are drawn from the springs, how sweetly soever they may taste to the curious mind, that thirsts for the applause which they sometimes procure, I fear there is often reason to pour them before the Lord with rivers of penitential tears, as the blood of souls, which have been forgotten, while these trifles have been remembered and preserved.'‡ Such, as

* See 1 Kings xx. 40.

† The divine, who spends all his time in study and contemplation on objects ever so sublime and glorious, while his people are left uninstructed, acts the same part the eagle would do, that should sit all day staring at the sun, while her young ones were starving in the nest.' Bishop Horne's Essays, p. 71. 'Can any thing be more opposed' (asks an eloquent Minister of his brethren) 'to the simple character of an herald of Christ, than a mere taste for elegant literature, the mere labour of a scientific student, the mere ardour of the philosopher or the historian? Was it for this you undertook the cure of souls? Is it for this you desert your closet, your sick chambers, your private devotional duties? A literary spirit in a minister of Christ is direct rebellion against the first claims of his high office.' Wilson's Essay, p. lv.

‡ Doddridge's Sermon on the neglect of souls. Works, vol.

we have already remarked, was the godly jealousy of Henry Martyn's spirit, fearing, lest in the midst of his literary and theological studies his soul should be deadened to his more spiritual avocations.* There is obviously much, that might legitimately engage our interest in an ordinary Christian course, which the solemn dedication of the Ordination vow impels us, if not to put away, at least to restrain within very contracted limits, under the conviction, (to use again the forcible words of Doddridge, who on this subject cannot be suspected of prejudice,) that 'many things employ a very large portion of our retired time, and are studied rather as polite amusements to our own mind, than as things, which seem to have an apparent subserviency to the glory of God, and the edification of our flock; and consequently, I fear they will stand as *articles of abatement*, if I may so express it, in our final account; and, when they come to be made manifest, will be found "works that shall be burnt," as being no better in the Divine esteem than "wood, hay, or stubble," (1 Cor. iii. 12, 15.) how beautifully soever they may have been garnished or gilded over."† There can be no better prospect of fruitfulness to our Ministry, than with the heavenly view of Leighton to '*count the whole world in comparison with the cross of Christ one grand impertinence*,' and to be brought to the mind of Professor Frank at the period of his conversion—'Whereas I had but too much idolized learning, I now perceive that all attainments at the feet of Gamaliel

iii. 248. The sermon is also given in 'Williams's Christian Preacher.'

* Note, pp. 66, 67.

† Doddridge's Sermon on the Neglect of Souls. Compare also his Family Expositor—Note on 1 Cor. iii. 15, and some important hints specially addressed to young Ministers, in his Obeservations on the Childhood of the Saviour—On Luke ii. Sect. xiv.

are to be valued like dung, in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord.'*

Christian self-denial must be extended to *Clerical amusements and recreations.* How worthy of imitation, as well as of admiration, is the principle, that led Mr. Cecil to cut the strings of his violin, and to throw aside his painting-brush, when he detected the interests of his mind diverted from present duty by the impulse of taste and accomplishments. Let the Ministry—as Mr. Scott exhorts us—'have our *whole time.* Let even recreation and animal refreshment be so regulated, moderated, and subordinated, that they may not interfere with our grand employment, or unfit us for it; but rather recruit and prepare us for it, that they may all become subservient to our main object.'† Neither mind nor body, indeed, can be preserved in health without moderate relaxation of the system. But what spiritual self-observer does not feel the need for incessant watchfulness, lest the influence of the love of ease and pleasure should abate the relish for heavenly employments, and consume in vanity or idleness those days and hours, which ought to have been industriously devoted to our high responsible obligations? It is no breach of charity to suppose, that some cases will be found among us, to

* Preface to professor Frank's 'Christ the Sum and Substance of Holy Scripture.' p. xvii. 'We are to pursue our principal study at the feet of Jesus Christ. The Son of God declared to the world what he had received from his Father, and his Ministers are to teach the faithful what they have first learned from the Son of God. The Apostle professes himself to "know nothing, but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." And, indeed, he who knows this truth well, knows all others; and he arrives at this knowledge in a degree proportionable to their own needs, and those of the church, who studies with a crucified spirit.' Pastoral Instructions to his Clergy, by Anthony Godeau, Bishop of Grasse and Vence, translated from the French, 1703.

‡ Scott's Letters and Papers, p. 309.

whom Massillon would have spoken, as he did to his own clergy—'What is the most unreasonable is, that the clergy who plead the necessity of amusements are ordinarily those who have the least need of them, who most neglect their duty, and the employment attached to their vocation. Their life consists in an habitual indolence. We see in them nothing serious, not even the discharge of their professional obligations, which are often hurried over with an air of fatigue, of reluctance, and of indecency. What ought to be their consolation is their trouble. They hasten into the world, where they may forget their profession and themselves together.'* There can be no difficulty in admitting the truth of Archbishop Secker's remark—'Not all things that are lawful are expedient; and certainly these things,' (speaking of worldly amusements) 'further than they are in themselves requisite for health of body and refreshment of mind, or some really valuable purpose, are all a misemployment of our leisure hours, which we ought to set our people a pattern of filling up well. A Minister of God's word, *attentive to his duty, will neither have leisure for such dissipations, public or domestic, nor liking to them.*'†

And may not this view of the subject apply to Clerical attendance upon oratorios,‡ musical festivals, and exhibitions of a similar character, which are not so decidedly "according to the course of this world" as to preclude a difference of opinion among us? Does not the principle of self-denial mark the strait line of the

* Charges, p. 142. † Charges, p. 238.

‡ The writer begs to refer to some letters from the pen of a most enthusiastic lover of music, written under the influence of that Christian self-denial, which enabled him to subjugate his most favourite pursuits to the designs of his office. Life of Rev. Legh Richmond, pp. 397—404.

Christian path? If our worldly parishioners, who hear our remonstrances against the pursuit of the vanities of the world, should express surprise or pleasure at meeting us at such places of resort, ought not our consciences to whisper a wholesome doubt respecting *the expediency* (to say the least) of our attendance? Much more, according to the rule just referred to, if our presence had given pain to a tender, or indeed, (as in the case alluded to by the apostle) a *scrupulous conscience*,* ought we to repeat our attendance? Such a restraint would not necessarily imply the unlawful character of our indulgence. But the neglect of the exercise of this spirit of Christian forbearance would be not less a "sin against Christ" than against our "weak brethren."† In doubtful cases Christian love and self-denial dictate the safe and best path. The exercise of restraint in the present instance would be the natural and direct expression of "love to the brethren." It would save us from the *possible hazard* of becoming stones of stumbling to those whom we ought to guide in the way of the cross. As an act of violence to our own inclination, at the supposed call of duty, it would be in the true spirit of our Divine Master's injunction—"Deny thyself:"‡ and an exemplification of the rule

* Comp. 1 Cor. viii. 10.

† 1 Cor. viii. 12. This point is argued with considerable force by Professor Campbell, Lecture iii. on the Pastoral Character, and by Archbishop Secker; Sermons, vol. iii. A respectable body of Christians (the Society of Friends) find it easy to deny themselves recreations of this kind. Has then a Minister of the Gospel, whose character should embody the principles of self-denial, any right to complain of these restrictions, which many tender as well as scrupulous consciences deem necessary to maintain the separate and consecrated sanctity of our official character? How paltry after all this sacrifice, compared with the worldling's daily exercise of self-denial, "rising up early, sitting up late, to eat the bread of sorrows," in pursuit of a shadow, a bubble, a nothing!

‡ Matt. xvi. 24.

of love—"Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use *not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*"* Upon this principle clergymen have been led to relinquish the amusement of shooting. If it be argued that no moral evil can be attached to this recreation, yet surely it does not exhibit the Christian Minister in his proper Levitical habits. Would not the transition be deemed somewhat violent, to visit the sick and dying in the way home from shooting, and, leaving the dog and gun at the threshold, to go into the chamber, to realize the nearness of eternity in its unspeakable horrors, or its everlasting joys? Would not a shooting dress rather repel than invite a tempted conscience, seeking for spiritual counsel at our mouth, or an awakened soul, anxious for an answer to the infinitely momentous question—"What must I do to be saved?" Such circumstances of our holy employment, as seem peculiarly to call for an unction from above, or to suppose an habitual frame of spiritual aspiration, carry to the mind so manifest an incongruity with a recreation of this kind, that it is difficult to place its abandonment upon any less ground than of positive duty. The lowering of the sacredness of the Ministerial character, our spiritual standard and heavenly calling, is most injurious to ourselves, and attended with a proportionate deterioration in the dignity, power, and fruitfulness of our work.

The sum of what the writer has ventured to offer for the consideration of his brethen on this subject is simply this—Whatever experience has proved to chill our fervour, to dissipate our mind, to divert our attention, or to occupy a large portion of time or interest, is the

* Gal. v. 13.

"right eye" that we are called to "pluck out and cast it from us."* Farming (as an amusement or a business, whether on a great or smaller scale,) seems wholly inconsistent. Gardening, accomplishments, literature, and even *theology* itself—except as it is made a *spiritual study*—must be "kept under, and brought into subjection" to the main design. Far be it from the Writer to advocate any tone of ascetic austerity. He would not render the bow useless by keeping it always bent. He would not forget that we are men as well as ministers, servants and not slaves. But do we not warn our people, that the love of any created object, predominant above our Saviour's claims to supreme affection, ruins their hopes of salvation for eternity? And ought not we to remind ourselves, that the attraction of mind to any one subject of interest, diverting our minds from our consecrated employment, involves it in the positive guilt of unfaithfulness to our Master, must bring a curse instead of a blessing upon our Ministry, and may well lead us to tremble for our ultimate safety? Let the heart be habitually in the work, and it will be found in a great measure to furnish its own relaxation, and sufficient variety for renewed refreshment in the midst of its more painful exercises. For whatever else may be needed, an ample range is left for well-disciplined and Christian enjoyment.

* Matt. v. 29. 'He that is appointed to minister in holy things must not suffer secular affairs, or sordid arts, to eat up a great portion of his employment. It was a great idleness in Theophylact, the patriarch of Constantinople, to spend his time in his stable of horses, when he should have been in his study, or in his pulpit, or saying his holy offices.' Bishop Taylor.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPIRIT OF COVETOUSNESS.

COVETOUSNESS in Ministers has almost grown to a proverb. Judas is an awful example of its consistency with the highest Ministerial gifts. It is not the fault of any Ecclesiastical system, but the natural principle of a corrupt and selfish heart. It readily appended itself to Popery from the transfer of the aggrandizing spirit of the system to individuals. But Judas and Demas had been its victims long before "the Man of sin" sprang up in the church. It has attached itself to Protestant establishments, either from the influx of wealth arising from their alliance with the temporal power; or, in the lower departments, from the want of sufficient means to meet the present demands and future exigencies of their situation. In this latter view especially, it allies itself to every system of Protestant dissent, where its operation is as habitual and as destructive as any in established systems in the Christian church.

The frequent scriptural allusions to this selfish principle in connexion with the sacred office, are most remarkable,* and were probably intended to warn the servant of God of a most prevalent temptation. Our Church, without an express mention of covetousness, has given in each of her Ordination services pointed and solemn allusions to its influence. She warns her

* The description of the Jewish teachers, Isaiah lvi. 11. Jer. vi. 13. Ezekiel xxxiv. 1—3. Micah iii. 11. Matt. xv. 5, 6. xxiii. 14—the Apostle's contrast of Timothy with the teachers in the Christian Church, (Phil. ii. 20, 21.) the frequent warnings of Ministers against "filthy lucre"—1 Tim. iii. 3, 8. Tit. i. 7. 1 Pet. v. 2. illustrate this point. Compare also Jude 11.

deacons from the word of God, that they be "not greedy of filthy lucre." She exhibits to her priests the awful picture of "an hireling;"* at the same time instructing them "how they ought to forsake and set aside (as much as they may) *all worldly cares* and studies," and questioning them again more closely, upon their diligence and readiness in "laying aside the study *of the world and the flesh.* She deems it necessary to give to her highest order of ministers a solemn charge upon this particular—"Be to the flock of Christ *a shepherd, not a wolf; feed them; devour them not.*"† It was a blot upon the celebrated heathen moralist,‡ that, while he declaimed with vehemence against covetousness, he was, throughout his life, a slave to the base traffic of usury. And how discreditable is earnest preaching against the influence of covetousness, if our personal habits or family appurtenances should exhibit its pollution. When we warn our people against the love of money, as the root of all evil,§ they will look into our own garden for this destructive weed, which may possibly be growing there, even while we are seeking to root it out of every garden in our parish.

Covetousness is very distinct from frugality, which is a real duty—a well-directed and very moderate use of the things of this life—"owing no man any thing," —"using the world as not abusing it"—like a good steward—making such provision for our families, as will answer the present necessity, and prevent them from becoming burdensome to the church. This with con-

* 'Hireling' 'not one, who performs the office or duty of a Minister for hire or reward, (for the Apostle, or rather our blessed Lord himself says—The labourer is worthy of his hire, or reward, 1 Tim. v. 18. Luke x. 7.) but one who endeavours to make a gain of godliness,' &c. Brewster, quoted in Bishop Mant's Prayer Book. † See the Ordination and Consecration Services.
‡ Seneca. § 1 Tim. vi. 10.

tentment upon Evangelical principles, forms a right Christian character. But covetousness is an inordinate thought of, desire after, and employment in the care of this world. The palpable and gross exhibition of this principle is seen in a *habit of saving*—or a watching too closely over what we have, and a rooted unwillingness to part with it. This is too often connected with a want of consideration and sympathy for the calls of distress, and enlarged consecration of our substance to the extension of our Redeemer's kingdom. One is grieved in casting our eyes over the Report of our Religious Societies to mark the average of subscriptions from those whose capabilities are so widely disproportionate. This may arise in some instances, from the great variety of channels, amongst which our benevolent fund is distributed; but in many cases does it not originate in a want of economy, in self-indulgence, or covetousness?

There are many specious forms of this principle, with those who are highly connected in the world by relative ties, patronage, or friendship. The individuals themselves may be unconscious of the hurtful influence of such connexions. It is too often exhibited to intelligent Christians in a lowered standard of separation from the world, in an unspiritual cast of mind, walk, and conversation, and in a want of Divine power and refreshment upon their Ministrations. In Mr. Cadogan of Reading, the dignity of the Ministerial character rose superior to the adventitious circumstances of elevated rank, without any degradation of his personal claims to respect; and the spirit of simplicity and holiness, maintained throughout his Ministration, were honoured with peculiar tokens of his Master's approbation.*

* Massillon has a remarkable sermon on the temptation of Christ which he transfers to the temptations of the Ministry. It is hoped

In the more ordinary walks of the Ministry we may mark the hateful workings of covetousness in a mean attention to small matters—in the motives that influence our plans of economy—in carefulness to maintain present appearances—in contrivances to shift off expenses upon others—in the natural excitement of pleasure in the prospect of gain—in an undue depression from the loss of it—in the natural current of our thoughts in the direction of the world—in the readiness in lesser matters to put it upon a level with religion. All or any of these actings of this detestable principle must issue in a feeling of coldness, hesitation, or disgust in the exercises of religion.

The same principle may be seen in a rigorous enforcement of ecclesiastical claims—a litigious and unconciliating spirit, ending in a fatal loss of Ministerial influence. There may be indeed no fair ground for the imputation of injustice or exertion; but this "root of bitterness" will show itself in a want of tenderness and recollection of the main ends of the Ministry, and the sole purpose for which a maintenance is secured to us.* Whatever consideration the claims of our family

that the instruction will not be rejected on account of the eccentric form of deduction in which it is given. I. A scheme to live like gentlemen—"Command these stones to be made bread." This danger belongs to the first entrance on the Ministry. II. Presumption to aspire after preferment—"He sat him on a pinnacle of the temple." This belongs to an aspiring Minister: the second degree. III. A boundless desire of riches and honour in elevated stations by which a man is induced to submit to abject services for the sake of elevation—"All this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

* Mr. Grimshaw is said to have been 'not rigorous in his exacting his dues, but contented with what his parishioners brought him. He would say to them—'I will not deserve your curses when I am dead for what I have received for my poor labour among you. I want no more of you than your souls for my God, and a bare maintenance for myself." Newton's Life of Grimshaw, p. 124. If he carried this principle beyond

may deserve, the obligations of our spiritual Ministry must maintain their ascendency. While also we preserve a due regard to the rights of our successors, Bishop Taylor gives us a wholesome caution: "Let not the *name of the Church be made a pretence for personal covetousness*, by saying, you are willing to remit many things, but you must not wrong the Church; for though it be true, that you are not to do prejudice to successors, yet many things may be forgiven upon just occasions, from which the Church shall receive no incommodity; but be sure, that there are but few things, which thou art bound to do in thy personal capacity, but *the same also, and much more*, thou art obliged to perform as thou art a public person.'* Even a heathen has remarked, that 'there is no more plain sign of a narrow and little mind, than the love of riches.'† And what need is there to exercise a constant guard against those inclinations and occasions of temptations, that feed the power of this subtle principle. How hard is it habitually to maintain a practical belief of the Scriptural declaration of the fearful influence of riches upon our spiritual interests, and, *by consequence*, upon our Ministry.—"Thou, O man of God" is the fatherly counsel to a young Minister—*flee these things.*‡ We want nothing but the return of Apostolical symplicity, self-denial, and love, to bring a Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit upon our Ministrations.

its legitimate bounds, yet the spirit of it is admirable. The truth of Archbishop Secker's remark will be generally admitted—'A due measure of disinterestedness is *one main requisite* for the success of a Clergyman's labours.' Charges, p.248. "*I seek not your's but you.*" 2 Cor. xii. 13, 14. See Scott on 1 Cor. ix. 13—18.

* Bishop Taylor's Advice to his Clergy. It may be found in Bishop Randolph's Enchiridion Theologicon, vol. i. or in the Clergyman's Instructor.

† Nihil est tam augusti tamque parvi animi, quam amare divitias. Cic. De Officiis. Lib. i.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 11.

Covetousness is a far more specious principle than worldly conformity. It has much to plead under the cover of necessity, justice, prudence, and economy. Yet under all its deceptive garbs its real character is detected. Is not the straitness of means often an excuse from the exercise of Christian charity, while little or no restraint is laid upon the expensiveness of the dress, the table, furniture, or mode of living? Is not the charitable fund, sometimes in seasons of depression, the first that is curtailed? And do we not continue to "dwell" as before "in ceiled houses, while the house of God lies waste?"*

Self-denial in the economy of the family must also exercise a wholesome restraint on this selfish principle. The pupilizing system, when engaged in principally for keeping up appearances, or the worldly advantage of children—the adoption of worldly maxims in the education and disposal of our families (which Mr. Scott considered to 'constitute a considerable part of the *sins of the Church* in the present day') come under this animadversion. It is also but too plain, that the families of Clergymen are sometimes brought up to worldly expectations, rather than as disciples of the cross, and citizens of heaven. Too much weight can scarcely be given to Mr. Scott's inestimable instructions on this subject, embodied as they were as the practical principles of his domestic system, and honoured with the most successful issue. 'We are to live'—he remarked—'at the altar; but a living, a bare decent maintenance, without *any avaricious or ambitious views of advancing ourselves or our families*, should content us.' It was upon this principle, his son informs us, 'he

* Compare Hag. i. 4.

acted through life—not that he in any way reflected upon Clergymen who were born to wealth, or on whom Providence otherwise conferred it, if only they made a proper use of it. *Aspiring after it* was what he condemned.' His favourite maxim was—'what is best for the soul is really best for us,' and 'he ever looked upon worldly possessions with a jealous eye, *for his family* as well as for himself.'—'The grand secret of his success,' he tells us (that which gave him the most satisfaction in the retrospect at the close of his life), appears to have been this—'that I always "sought" *for my children as well as for myself* "in *the first place* the kingdom of God and his righteousness." 'This view' —his son observes—'would extend to the value, practically and evidently set upon eternal in preference to temporal things; and very particularly to the disposal of his children in life, the places of instruction to which they should be sent, the families they should visit, the connections which they should form, and the openings which should be embraced or rejected for them.'*

Covetousness in all its varied forms is more easily detected in a Minister than in private Christians. The sources of his clerical income being drawn from his people, are generally known, and consequently its capabilities and disposal are matters of public animadversion. Besides, "as a city set upon a hill, he cannot be hid."† The marks of this principle upon the appearance of his household are "known and read of all men." The great Apostle could call his God to witness, that in his Thessalonian ministry he had "never at any time used a cloke of covetousness;"‡ and doubtless this practical exposition of the heavenly character of his exhortations

* Scott's Life, pp. 591, 611—614. Compare, pp. 91, 396.
† Matt. v. 14. ‡ 1 Thess. ii. 5. Compare also Acts xx. 33—35.

was one of the grand main-springs of his Ministerial success. On the other hand there is no more fatal hindrance to the Ministry, none that makes our person and labours more contemptible in the eyes of the world, than this idolatrous principle. Its indulgence is in direct opposition to the design of our office, which is to draw men from earth to heaven. It operates unfavourably upon many sources of Ministerial usefulness—such as simple devotedness to the work, charity, and hospitality, according to the extent of our means. It besots and enchains the mind under the influence of a most corroding passion, which hinders the spiritual elevation of the soul, and defiles the consecrated character of our work.* George Herbert's primitive Parson, therefore,—'labours most in those things which are most apt to scandalize his parish. He is very circumspect in avoiding all covetousness; neither being greedy to get, nor niggardly to keep, nor troubled to lose, any worldly wealth; but in all his words and

* Comp. Gregory de Curâ Past. Part i. ch. xi. 'The moment a strong and governing desire of accumulating property takes possession of a minister's mind—preach with orthodoxy, and some degree of animation, he may—visit his parishioners to a certain extent, he may; but a devoted labourer in the vineyard, who has one object in view—the extension and glory of his Master's kingdom, and who makes all his pursuits subservient to that object, he will not be. It is just as impossible for a man to be a great accumulator of property, and at the same time a faithful devoted Minister of Christ, as it is to establish a fellowship between light and darkness, Christ and Belial.' Professor Miller's Letters, pp. 433, 434. The closeness and accuracy of observation of the heathen on this point is very remarkable. Nothing wins the way for the Christian missionary with them more than a disinterested spirit. They consider freedom from the love or care of money the strongest mark of the influence of Christianity. It was remarked by one of the most intelligent among them, of a native Christian teacher, lately deceased—'There was only one flaw he discerned—in every thing else he was perfectly brought under the power of the gospel—he was not covetous: *but he had a degree of reluctance in parting with his money.*'

actions slighting and disesteeming it; even to a wondering that the world should so much value wealth, which in the day of wrath hath not one drachm of comfort for us.'* The most effectual preventions to the operation of this principle is to have but few wants; to learn from our poor Christian day-labourers to cultivate faith for the future, to live not for men or for time, but for eternity—to have the glory of God and the good of our fellow-creatures permanently in view—to study our Master's life and example—to exercise ourselves in that habitual eyeing of the cross, which will produce a gradual conformity to its spirit—and to remember, as Ministers, that "an earnest desire to gain continually more souls to God is the sole avarice permitted to a pastor.†

* Herbert's Country Parson, chap. iii.

† Quesnel on Tit. i. 7. The subject of this Section suggests the notice of the opposite spirit of *improvidence*. Distressing embarrassments have often arisen, either from wasteful wives, or from personal habits of negligence, by which Ministers have been brought before their people in the character of paupers, losing all their respectability, the true dignity and independence of their office, and their usefulness in the church of God. Whether these difficulties were incurred without rational prospect of deliverance; or whether charitable assistance was contemplated, as opening a way of escape, the motive is most unworthy of the high disinterestedness of the Christian Ministry. Poverty, after the example of Christ and his apostles, can never be a disgrace; but liberality and wastefulness with the resources of others (attended too often with crooked devices for our own personal interests), must bring the Ministry into utter contempt. The strict economy which the Ministerial income often demands, is a Providential appointment; nor can we overstep the bounds, (except perhaps under peculiar dispensations) without equal discredit to ourselves and to our office. The aggravation of the evil is, that the embarrassments arise not from actual necessity, but from needless expenditure. And therefore while we would deprecate the pitiful savings of meanness, we would seriously recommend a wise economy in maintaining the strict balance between our resources and our wants; and a liberal spirit, within the bounds of those resources, to be attained by habits of plainness, simplicity, and self-denial—duties of the highest importance for the exhibition of the elevated standard and separate walk of the Minister of Christ.

CHAPTER VI.

NEGLECT OF RETIREMENT.

In the midst of the incessant, pressing, and active avocations of the Christian Ministry, it is well to recollect the considerate and seasonable advice of our Divine Master—"*Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile.*"* The spirit of prayer cannot breathe freely in the atmosphere of constant and exciting employment. Not that we would seek retirement, like the contemplative monk, for the purposes of abstraction, but to recruit our spiritual energies for renewed exercises of self-denial and perseverance. Macknight's opinion is highly probable, that St. Paul's journey to Arabia immediately subsequent to his conversion (of which no mention is made in the inspired record of his Ministerial travels) was not to exercise his Ministry, but to 'receive further revelations.' Secret prayer and meditation, were doubtless the channels of Divine revelation to his soul; while the more accurate and undisturbed study of his own heart, combined with prospective calculations of the fearful cost before him, probably occupied most profitably the interval of comparative privacy.† Such was the spirit of Brainard's advice to a young candidate for the Ministry,—in his own holy character—'the way,' said he, 'to enjoy the

* Mark vi. 31.

† Macknight on Gal. i. 17. Mr. Fletcher, when regret was expressed at his limited sphere, upon his first entrance into the Ministry, remarked with his characteristic piety—'If God does not call me to so much public duty, I have the *more time for study, prayer, and praise.*' Cox's Life of Fletcher, p. 24. Compare also Quesnel on Gal. i. 17—19.

Divine presence, and be fitted for distinguished service for God, is to live a life of *great devotion and constant self-dedication* to him: observing the motives and dispositions of our own hearts, whence we may learn the corruptions that lodge there, and our constant need of help from God for the performance of the least duty: and, oh! dear sir, let me beseech you frequently to attend to the precious duties of secret fasting and prayer.'* 'How great is the difference,' observes Quesnel, 'between a preacher formed gradually by the hand of God in retirement, fasting, and prayer, and those ordained in haste, who have no other school but the world, no other masters but themselves, and no other preparation than human studies, interrupted by worldly conversations, diversions,' &c.† The few among us who are *necessarily* public men deserve the sympathy and prayers of the church. If their habits of life were not very clearly appointed for them in their Master's work, their peculiar temptations, as we trust, sensibly felt, and their watchfulness and simplicity of faith habitually exercised, their own souls must suffer loss, whatever gain might accrue to the church through their disinterested labours. Probably a strict adherence to the quaint but excellent rule that Eliot gives to his young students is of no small service to them—'I pray you look to it, that you be early birds: meaning, we conclude, not merely early risers, but early Christian students, and above all, early worshippers. Luther's custom to give his three best hours of the day to this purpose, and Bradford studying on his knees, it is to be feared, are more often alluded to than followed. The most diligent pastor will feel

* Letter ix. appended to his Life. † On Luke iii. 2.

the importance, both to himself and to his people, of living in his study as well as in his parish; not only for the necessary digestion of the subject matter of his Ministrations, but most chiefly for the cultivation of a nearer approach and a more habitual access to God.* How delightful would it be to us, and how edifying to our people, to bring forth that Scripture as food to their souls, which the teaching of the Spirit of God hath opened to our own hearts in prayer.† Truths that are obtained and wrought out in prayer have a peculiar unction. Waiting on the Lord will never be an encouragement to indolence. In the habit of it, the weakest Ministrations will be efficient——in the neglect of it the most powerful will be vain. Indeed, 'the spirit of our Ministry,' as Massillon admirably observes, 'is a spirit of prayer. Prayer is the ornament of the priesthood, the leading feature of our character. Without prayer a Minister is of no use to the church, nor of any advantage to mankind. He sows, and God gives no increase. He preaches, and his words are only like "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." He recites the praises of God, while his heart is far

* Bishop Burnet's advice on this subject is truly episcopal—'To give the studies of the clergy their full effect, a priest that is much in his study ought to employ a great part of his time in secret and fervent prayer, for the direction and blessing of God in his labours, for the constant assistance of his Holy Spirit, and for a lively sense of Divine matters, that so he may feel the impressions of them grow deep and strong upon his thoughts. This, and this only, will make him go on with his work without wearying, and be always rejoicing in it. This will make his expressions of these things to be happy and noble, when he can bring them out of the good treasure of his heart, that is ever full, and always warm with them.' Pastoral Care, chap. viii.

† Thus Cyprian speaks of his own Ministry—'Non solum proferimus verba, quæ de Scripturarum sacris fontibus veniunt, sed cum ipsis verbis preces et Dominum et vota sociamus.' De bono pudicitiæ.

from him." It is prayer alone then that gives the whole strength and efficacy to our different administrations: and that man ceases, if I may use the expression, to be a public Minister from the time he ceases to pray. It is prayer which supplies him with consolation in all his labours, and he celebrates the ordinances of religion as the hireling performs his work—he considers them as a heavy task, or a severe imposition, if prayer doth not assuage its troubles, or console him for want of success.'* If Solomon felt his need of supplication for heavenly wisdom to discriminate the different characters of his great people, and to devise and execute the best-conducted measures for their prosperity, do not we "go out and come in" before our people with far deeper responsibilities, and yet with the ignorance of "a little child" to "discern between good and bad," if uninstructed with heavenly wisdom? The most eminent Minister will be most ready to cry out—"Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart"† —in the consciousness that the most splendid talents, the most mighty eloquence, and the most devoted diligence, will be utterly inefficient, except the unction be brought down from heaven by frequent and fervent supplication.

Prayer therefore is one half of our Ministry,‡ and it gives to the other half all its power and success. It is the *appointed medium of receiving spiritual communications for the instruction of our people.* Those who walk most closely with God are most spiritually intelligent in the secret of his covenant.§ Many can set their seal to Luther's testimony, that he often obtained more

* Charges, pp. 24, 25. † Comp. 1 Kings iii. 7—9.
‡ Comp. Acts. vi. 4.
§ See Psalm xxv. 14. Comp. 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

knowledge in a short time by prayer, than by many hours of laborious and accurate study. It will also *strengthen the habitual engagedness of our hearts in our work*, and our natural exercises and capacities for it. Living near to the fountain-head of influence, we shall be in the constant receipt of fresh supplies of light, support, and consolation—to assist us in our duties, to enable us for our difficulties, and to assure us of present acceptance, unfailing, and seasonable grace, and a suitable measure of ultimate success. The same heavenly resource will furnish us *with fruitful matter for experimental intercourse with our people*—giving us a clear insight into the workings of nature and grace, of sin and holiness, and enduing us with a spiritual ability to counterwork the wiles of Satan and the deceitfulness of sin in their incessant and fatal influence upon immortal souls. Hence also we shall be enabled to *diffuse the spirit of the gospel* in the mode of our *Ministrations*, in adapting them, under the influence of Divine wisdom, to the several cases of our flock—speaking with power to the unawakened—with compassion to the hardened—binding up "the bruised reed"—and "strengthening," by solemn admonitions and expostulations, "the things that remain" among us "that were ready to die."* Nor is it the least advantage flowing from this habit of prayer, that it *enables us to advocate the cause of our people* before God, as well as to sympathize with their difficulties, and to lay ourselves out for their instruction, edification, and comfort. It is impossible to tell how large a portion of the prosperity of the church of Colosse flowed from the constant and laborious fervency of the supplications of Epaphras

* Rev. iii. 2.

on their behalf.* Probably these secret labours were as fruitful as his public services; and there can be little doubt, but we shall find that our most successful hours of employment for our people were not those when we were speaking to them from God, but when we were speaking for them to God. In this view it is of the utmost importance to *associate our own interests with those of our people*, and to unite prayer for ourselves with intercession for them. The help we may be able to afford them in their difficulties, trials, and weakness, is intimately connected with the spiritual temperament of our own minds, acquired or maintained through the same organ of heavenly communication which we recommend for their daily use and encouragement. The success of this operation is so certain, that an eminent divine has laid it down as a general rule—'that when we would have any great things to be accomplished, the best policy is, to work by an engine which the world sees nothing of.'† Thus Archbishop Secker gave this valuable and encouraging advice to his clergy—'Form yourselves thoroughly, by devout meditation and fervent prayer, to seriousness of heart, and zeal for the eternal welfare of souls; *for then every thing else that you are to do will follow of course.*'‡ Our Master's example on this point is much to be observed. As man, he had most responsible concerns to transact with God. Nothing important was done without prayer. His entrance on his Ministry was with prayer§—his ordination of his first Ministers was preceded by a whole night of prayer.‖ After a day spent in works of instruction and mercy,

* See Col. iv. 12.
† Dr. Preston: formerly Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. ‡ Secker's Charges, p. 267. § Luke iii. 21
‖ Luke vi. 12.

such as would have included a week of our ordinary labour, time was redeemed from sleep for this sacred employment.*

The most effectual hindrances, therefore, to the fruitfulness of our pastoral work are those which impede our personal communion with the Lord. The great enemy thus successfully intercepts the supplies of spiritual life, so that the work of God within our own souls languishes from the want of its accustomed and needful support. There is the greater need of this heavenly exercise, lest activity in our public employment should be considered to atone for neglect of private intercourse with God, and thus our profession should become a snare to ourselves, and divested of all spiritual savour to our flock. Henry Martyn had occasion to lament that 'want of private devotional reading and shortness of prayer through incessant sermon-making had produced much strangeness between God and his own soul.' And in the review of the first year of his ministry, 'he judged that he had dedicated too much time to *public Ministrations*, and too little to *private communion* with God.'† Mr. Scott gives a most wholesome caution on this point—'The principle that made the Apostle determine not to "serve tables," though a good work in itself, should render Ministers in this day very careful not so to give their services, even to the most useful Societies, and to attend the meetings of them, as to *prevent their* "*giving themselves continually to the word of God and prayer.*" A danger at present seems to arise on this side.'‡ The Writer would therefore wish to draw his own mind and his brethren habitually to this recollection, that nothing will enrich or console us

* Mark i. 21—35. † Martyn's Life, pp. 60, 62.
‡ Scott's Letters and Papers, p. 313.

in the neglect of intimate communion with God. We must "walk with God" *at any rate*, or our souls will die. Even Christian communion will form a most empty substitute for this hallowed intercourse. The command is—"Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door."* Shut out not only vanity and the world, but even for a time "the communion of Saints." The soul may lose its spiritual vigour in any company but that of God—in the best as well as in the worst—in the Church as well as in the world—in the active engagements of the Ministry as well as in secular employments.

It was said of Fletcher by his interesting Biographer, that 'his deepest and most sensible communications with God *were enjoyed in those hours when the door of his closet was shut against human creatures, as well as human cares.* His closet was his favourite retirement, to which he constantly retreated, whenever his public labours allowed him a season of leisure. His public labours, astonishing as they were, bore but little proportion to those internal exercises of prayer and supplication, to which he was wholly given in private. The former of necessity were frequently discontinued; but the latter were almost uninterruptedly maintained from hour to hour. He lived in the spirit of prayer.'† Was not this the secret of the extraordinary power that rested upon his Ministrations? The out-pouring of this spirit of supplication would revive our work and enlarge our success. We know who hath said—"Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and *concerning the work of my hands command ye me.*"‡

* Matt. vi. 6.
† Gilpin's notes on Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul, pp. 50, 51.
‡ Isaiah xlv. 11.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INFLUENCE OF SPIRITUAL PRIDE.

ONE of the most profound and accurate observers of the heart has remarked, that spiritual pride is the main door of Satan's advantage over the faithful servants of God.* And indeed many circumstances, trifling in themselves, but gathering fearful strength from incidental causes, add fuel to the secret flame, and in the destructiveness of the issue leaves us to exclaim—"Behold! how great a fire a little matter kindleth."† A consistent Minister, affectionately devoted to his work, honoured of God, and acceptable to his flock, by some is regarded as an oracle, and they are almost ready, as at Lystra,‡ to "do sacrifice unto him." What a large share of humility, what unceasing supply of Divine grace is needed to resist a temptation falling in so powerfully with the growing principle of the natural heart! 'Great care must be taken, while we are endeavouring to destroy external idols, or those of vice in others, that we do not insensibly substitute ourselves in their place.'§ Successful fishermen need especial watchfulness, "lest they sacrifice to their net, and burn incense unto their drag."‖ We must indeed labour and pray unceasingly for enlarged success. We must acknowledge with thankfulness, the measure that has been granted. But let us not forget that, should a

* President Edwards' Thoughts on the Revival in New England.
† James iii. 5. ‡ Acts xiv. 13.
§ Quesnel on Acts xiv. 15. Sæpe sibi de se mens ipsa mentitur, et fingit se de bono opere amare quod non amat, de mundi autem gloriâ, non amare quod amat. Gregor de Curâ Pastor.
‖ Hab. i. 16.

season of remarkable prosperity be granted, it will probably prove an hour of fearful temptation to our own souls.

Cotton Mather appears to have been severely exercised on this subject, on his first entrance into the Ministry. We must refer to his life for a most close and detailed self-scrutiny, the substance of which is as follows:—'Apprehensions of pride, *the sin of young Ministers*, working in my heart, filled me with inexpressible bitterness and confusion before the Lord. I found, that when I met with enlargement in prayer or preaching, or answered a question readily and suitably, I was apt to applaud myself, in my own mind. I affected pre-eminence above what belonged to my age or worth. I therefore endeavoured to take a view of my pride, as *the very image of the Devil*, contrary to the grace and image of Christ—as an offending of God, and grieving of his Spirit—as the most unreasonable folly and madness for one who had nothing singularly excellent, and who has a nature so corrupt—as infinitely dangerous, and ready to provoke God to deprive me of my capacities and opportunities. I therefore resolved to carry my distempered heart to Jesus Christ, that all-sufficient Physician, that he might cure it—to watch against my pride—to study much the nature and aggravations of it, and the excellency of the contrary grace.'

There is weighty truth in Cotton Mather's remark, that spiritual pride is '*the sin of young Ministers.*' They do not generally learn so soon as Melancthon, the strength of 'old Adam.' The freshness and excitement awaken and maintain their energies in considerable power. Much interest is called forth, and an atmosphere of popularity surrounds them. All this tends to blind their perception of "the mystery of iniquity"

within, and to excite self-confidence, until they are almost ready to conceive that their services are of high importance and necessity in the dispensations of God. 'It is a very uncommon thing for men not to receive at least one part of the glory that is offered them. This is the touchstone, by which the fidelity of the Minister of Christ is tried. We value ourselves upon rejecting gross commendations, and extravagant flattery, because we would not make ourselves ridiculous. But when the praise is fine and delicate, and the incense prepared with art, how seldom is it that we do not suffer ourselves to be intoxicated thereby."* "Good report" is a far closer test of the internal principle than "evil report." There is equal truth and knowledge of character in that sacred aphorism—"As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise."† How few of us perhaps could say with Henry Martyn—'Men frequently admire me, and I am pleased, *but I abhor the pleasure that I feel.*' The same Christian tenderness and self-suspicion appeared upon the report of his Ministerial success. 'I was encouraged and refreshed beyond description, and could only cheerfully and gratefully offer up myself to God's service; but it was

* Quesnel on Acts xiv. 13, 24. 'Si minister verbi laudatur, versatur in periculo.' Augustine.—"They are not our best friends that stir the pride of our hearts by the flattery of their lips. The graces of God in others, I confess, are thankfully to be owned, and under discouragements and temptations to be wisely and modestly spoken of; but the strongest Christians do scarcely show their own weakness in any one thing more than they do in hearing their own praises. Christian, thou knowest thou carriest gunpowder about thee. Desire those that carry fire, to keep at a distance from thee. It is a dangerous crisis, when a proud heart meets with flattering lips. Faiththful, seasonable, and discreet reproofs are much more safe to us, and advantageous to the mortifications of sin in our souls." Flavel. † Prov. xxvii. 21.

at the same time a check to my mind to reflect, that though God might in his sovereignty bless his word by my mouth, I was not on that account less sinful in my Ministrations.'*

'Selfishness is indeed the peculiar character of this sin. It is often, as if we could take no comparative interest in the conversion of sinners through other instrumentality than our own, or as if our regard to the glory of God was measured by the opportunities afforded for the display of our own glory. We wish for eminence rather than for usefulness. We want to stand alone. We cannot bear any thing that shines too near us, and with a probable tendency to eclipse our own brightness. How different was the spirit of the Jewish Lawgiver, who was willing that all the people should share in his extraordinary gifts!† How different was the temper of the Great Apostle, who could rejoice in the extension of the Gospel from unchristian motives, and by the mouth even of those, who were ranging themselves in unprovoked opposition to his disinterested labours.‡

The hindrance of this sin to the progress of the Christian Ministry may be argued *a priori* from the Scriptural character of God as a jealous God, who "giveth not his glory to another,"§ and who therefore will blast all professed assumptions to the honour of Divine agency as encroachments upon his sovereign prerogative. It may also be *practically evinced* by the testimony of conscience, observation, and experience. Is not "the axe" powerless when it dares to "boast itself against him that heweth therewith?"‖ Have not we uniformly found that those Ministrations which have

* Martyn's Life, pp. 43, 68. † Numb. xi. 29.
‡ Phil. i. 15—18. § Isa. xlii. 8. ‖ Isa. x. 15.

brought us most elevation and honour with men, have been scantily favoured with the tokens of the presence and power of God? It is never likely to be so well with us, as when we are content to appear like Paul at Corinth, "fools for Christ's sake, weak and despised,"* and when we are ready, "most gladly to glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us."† It is of little comparative moment that our Ministry should bear the stamp of talent, erudition, or pathos. But if it should be characterized by the savour of humility, and love, it will be best adapted to display the glories of Emmanuel, and most honoured with the manifestations of his Spirit in our people.

CHAPTER VIII.

ABSENCE OR DEFECT OF PERSONAL RELIGION.

It was surely not without reason or meaning that the Apostle, addressing, first the elders, and afterwards the Bishop of the Church of Ephesus, upon the subject of their important charge, places a personal caution first in order—"Take heed *to yourselves—to thyself.*"‡ For how awful is it to appear as a Minister, without being really a Christian! to have a competency, and even (by continual exercise) an increase of Ministerial gifts, while our real character is only, that we "have a name that we live, but we are dead!" How difficult, how dreadful, to preach an unknown Saviour! The importance of personal religion is strongly expressed in our Lord's prayer for his Apostles, that they

* 1 Cor. iv. 10. † 2 Cor. xii. 9.
‡ Acts xx. 28. 1 Tim. iv. 16.

might be renewed, purified, and consecrated for their most arduous office.* It is *this that gives power and unction* to the commission which we profess to deliver from the mouth of God. The Roman orator has told us, that no man can be truly eloquent on a subject with which he is unacquainted.† The exhibition of unknown and unfelt truth can hardly be expected to be productive of permanent effect. Baxter remarks with his characteristic solemnity—'Verily it is the common danger and calamity of the Church to have unregenerate and unexperienced Pastors, and to have so many men become preachers, before they are Christians, to be sanctified by dedication to the altar as God's Priests, before they are sanctified by hearty dedication to Christ as his disciples, and so to worship an unknown God, and to preach an unknown Christ, an unknown Spirit, an unknown state of holiness and communion with God, and a glory that is unknown, and likely to be unknown for ever. He is like to be but a heartless preacher, that hath not the Christ and grace that he preacheth in his heart.'‡

Though indeed the blessing is in the institution, not

* John xvii. 17. † Cic. de Orat. lib. 1.

‡ Reformed Pastor. 'No theological erudition, as such, can answer the question—"What must I do to be saved?" He who furnishes the reply, must have something better, the possession of the same religion, which he can then only satisfactorily explain to others. Otherwise he will be either struck dumb by the inquiry, or be a blind leader of the blind, confident in his own wisdom, and in that wisdom liable to perish everlastingly.' Antichrist, by Rev. J. Riland, p. 118. 'Neque enim aliorum salutem sedulo unquam *curabit, qui suam* negligit.' Calv. on Acts xx. 28. 'It is meet,' said an excellent practical Divine, 'that they who are to convert others, should be effectually converted themselves. John must first eat the book, and then prophesy. Rev. x. 9. The Ministers of the Gospel must first themselves eat the book of God, which is indeed done when they are not only in their minds enlightened, but their hearts are mollified and brought into subjection to the word of Christ. Unless Christ be thus learned spirit-

in the instrument, yet there can be little doubt, but in the ordinary course of dispensation a deficiency in the instrument paralyzes the power of the institution. The want of personal religion is therefore a most serious let and hindrance to ministerial efficiency. In the *general work of instruction*, the experience of the power of the Gospel is necessary to direct our treatment of the different cases of our Ministry.* The recollection of the means by which we were brought to the knowledge of the truth, and subsequently confirmed and established, is most important for the counsel of our people in cases of perplexity. In the work of *conviction*, what but an experimental perception of our own sinfulness can enable us to expose the deformity and deceitfulness of sin? Or how can we exhibit the exceeding breadth and spirituality of the law of God, except we have felt ourselves its killing, condemning power? In the more *delightful work of encouragement*, the power of administering the consolations of the Gospel is connected with the reception of them in our own hearts.† In a similar manner the love of the Saviour, the faithfulness of his word, the beauty of holiness, the prospects of eternity, will of course be most effectually exhibited by those who can say—"*We also believe, and therefore speak.*"‡

Little fruitfulness can be expected in the *pulpit department of our Ministry*, in the absence or defect

ually and really, Divines shall speak of the word of God, as men speak of riddles, and as priests in former times said the matins, when they hardly knew what they said' Perkins on Gal. i. 15.

* Brainerd remarked to his brother on his death-bed—'When Ministers feel these gracious influences on their hearts, it wonderfully assists them to come at the consciences of men, and as it were, handle them with their hands; whereas without them, whatever reason or oratory we make use of, we do but make use of stumps instead of hands.' See his Life, a choice piece of Ministerial Biography. † 2 Cor. i. 4—6. ‡ Ib. iv. 13.

of the principle of heart-felt religion. 'I will be sure to live well,' said George Herbert on the day of his induction to Bemerton, 'because the virtuous life of a clergyman is the most powerful eloquence to persuade all that see it to reverence and love, and at least to desire to live like him.'* Indeed, what power of persuasiveness can there be in the wearisome task of speaking of Divine things without Divine affections? A man who is unable to pursuade himself to be holy, can have little hope of succeeding with the consciences of others. 'I would advise such preachers,' says Baxter, 'to go to the congregation, and there preach over Origen's sermon on Psa. l. 16, 17,† and when they have read this text, to sit down, and expound, and apply it by their tears, and then to make a free confession of their sins, and lament their case before the assembly, and desire their earnest prayers to God for pardoning and renewing grace; and so to close with Christ in heart, that before admitted him no further than into the brain; that hereafter they may preach a Christ whom they know, and may feel what they speak, and may commend the riches of the Gospel by experience.'‡ It is neither genius, nor the

* Walton's Life of George Herbert.

† Referring to an affecting incident in Origen's history, where shortly after his excomnunication on account of having sacrificed to the idols, he was requested, and in a manner constrained, to preach at Jerusalem. He opened his Bible, Psa. 1. 16, "Unto the wicked, saith God, why dost thou preach my law," and was so overcome by the remembrance of his sin, that he closed the book with tears, and melted the whole congregation in sympathy with his sorrow. Clark's Marrow of Ecclesiastical History, where is given his own most striking expressions of grief and contrition on the occasion, pp. 20—23.

‡ Reformed Pastor. 'To preach of regeneration, of faith, when a man has no spiritual understanding of these things, is to talk of the sweetness of honey, when we never tasted it, or of the excellency of such a country, which we were never in, but know by maps

eloquence of the schools, nor oratorical declamation that is required for pulpit effect; but that Christian eloquence of feeling and of love, which marks the impression of the spirit as well as the letter of the Bible—that genuine pathos and simplicity, with which 'a good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth that which is good.'* This 'rhetoric of the life' Leighton justly pronounces to 'give to the instructions of the pulpit an energy far beyond the reach of the loftiest strains of unhallowed oratory.' To obtain this most desirable qualification, we must ourselves taste the word, before we distribute it to our people. We must carefully connect it with our devotional reading, and with our sacred retirement. A sermon, however well digested, can never be well preached, until it has been first preached to ourselves.† It is the present experience, nourishment, and enjoyment, that gives a glow of unction and spiritual influence, far beyond the power of adventitious accomplishment, and makes us, not only edifying to our people, but what is more rare and difficult, profitable Ministers to ourselves. Nothing is wanted to give effect to our public Ministrations, but to bear our

only If thou knowest the truths of God but by books, by authors only, and thy own heart feeleth not the power of these things, thou art but as the conduit, that letteth out wine or refreshing water to others, but thou thyself tasteth not of it; or like the hand that directeth the passenger but thou thyself standest still.' Anthony Burgess's Funeral Sermon for Rev. T. Blake.

* Matt. xii. 34.

† This was Doddridge's custom, of which Orton has preserved several interesting specimens.—See Life of Doddridge, chap. ii. Mr. Robert Bolton, one of the most eminent divines in the seventeenth century, professed on his death-bed 'that he never taught any Godly point, but he first wrought it on his own heart.' Mr. Shepherd of New-England gave the same testimony. How confidently, when we have thus proved our armour, may we venture to recommend it!

message written upon our hearts, and to convey to our people deep and weighty impressions of the things of God from our own experience. We must bring them something not only—"which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon," but "which our hands have handled of the word of life, if we desire them to have joint fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ."* Like John the Baptist,† we should behold the Saviour ourselves, and point him out to our people from our own perception of his glory and love.

The important connexion of personal religion with Ministerial success is yet further evident, in *confirming the testimony of the Gospel with the power of a Christian example.*‡ Fenelon well observes, in his Dialogue on Eloquence, 'that moral instructions have no weight nor influence, when they are neither supported by clear principles, nor good examples. Whom do you see converted by them? People are accustomed to hear such harangues, and are amused by them, as

* 1 John i. 1—3. † John i. 36.

‡ The judgment of the ancient church was most concurrent on this particular.—'Non possunt quæ doces habere firmitatem, nisi ea prior feceris' Lactan. Instit. Lib. 4, c. 24. Non confundant opera tua sermonem tuum: ne, cum Ecclesiâ loqueris tacitus quilibet respondeat, cur ergo hæc quæ dicis, ipse non facis? Sacerdotis Christi os, mens, manusque concordent. Hieron ad Nepot. The Council of Trent also exhibited an elevated standard of Ministerial consistency.—'Nihil est, quod alios magis ad pietatem et Dei cultum assidue instruat, quam eorum vita et exemplum, qui se Divino Ministerio dedicarunt, &c. Quapropter sic decet omnino clericos in sortem Domini vocatos, vitam moresque suos omnes componere, ut habitu, gestu, incessu, sermone, aliisque omnibus rebus nil nisi grave, moderatum, ac religione plenum præ se ferant, &c.' Concil. Trid Sess. 22. c. 1. Care however must be taken to distinguish between the self-righteousness of a mere external gravity, and the spirituality of character, resulting from evangelical principles, and influencing the heart to all the exercises of Ministerial devotedness.

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importance of this personal godliness in Ministers exhibited in the deep wounds of the Church from their open ungodliness or inconsistency? "The sin of Eli's sons was very great before the Lord, *for men abhorred* the offering of the Lord."* It is painful to remark, that these young men have found their successors in every age, in men who have "builded again" with their lives "the things which they had destroyed" by their doctrine, and have made "themselves transgressors" with a weighty load of responsibility and guilt.† On the other hand the power of a consistent Ministry of the word has been often exhibited. When the priesthood of Levi had "the law of truth in his mouth, he *did turn many away from iniquity*."‡ The holiness of the faithful ministry of John struck awe even into wicked Herod, while "many for a season" and many probably for more than a season, "rejoiced in his light."§ When the hand of the Lord worked mightily with the Ministry of Barnabas, the reason seems to be given—*for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith*, and *much people were added to the Lord.*"‖ Doubtless much of the secret of the Apostle's success in Thessalonica was found in the appeal which he was enabled to make before them all —"Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and

is necessary to show, that the man who labours to produce new modes of feeling and thinking, is not only the convert of his own opinions, but an example of their practical influence in forming a spiritual character' Bishop of Winchester's Ministerial character of Christ, pp. 170, 171.

* 1 Sam. ii. 17.

† Nisi ipsi sacerdotes in omnibus virtutibus Christianis fidelium exemplaria sint—plus improba vita destruunt, quam sana doctrina ædificant: dedecori sunt sanctissimæ religioni, de veritate eorum, quæ prædicant, addubitare docent; atque ita Libertinismo et atheismo latam portam pandunt. Wits de Vero Theologo.

‡ Mal. ii. 5, 6.

§ Mark vi. 20. John v. 35.

‖ Acts xi. 23, 24.

justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe."* 'Happy those labourers in the Church, the secret savour of whose life and conversation attracts people after Christ.'†

The Missionary Eliot, appeared to 'impose a law upon himself, that he would leave something of God, and heaven, and religion, with all that should come near him, so that in all places his company was attended with majesty and reverence. We cannot say that we ever saw him walking any whither, but he was therein walking with God, and it might be said of him as was said of Origen—'*Quemadmodum docet, sic vixit;* and *quemadmodum vixit sic docet.*'‡ Now such an habitual Ministry, spreading the atmosphere of heaven over the ordinary employments of secular life, proves the stamp of a Divine impression, and is a "manifestation of the truth which commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God." It is the picture of the "angel standing in the sun"—the undoubted representative of the Divine Majesty.

We may advert to one further illustration of this important subject, that it not only confirms the testimony with the power of example, but it *makes us also to water the seed sown with fervent prayer.* As prayer is the life of spiritual religion, it follows of necessity, that a spiritual Minister will be a man of prayer. The importance of this subject has however been already detailed,§ and is only now adverted to to complete this section of the subject; and to mark the mutual relations and bearings of every department of the sacred office.

But it may be asked—do we sufficiently consider how much our personal religion is endangered from the

* 1 Thess. ii. 10.
† Quesnel on Mark vi. 33.
‡ Mather's Life of Eliot.
§ See Chap. vi.

very circumstance of religion being our profession? In going through the duties, putting on the appearances, speaking the language, and exhibiting the feelings of religion—what care, what watchfulness, what tenderness of heart, what earnest prayer, is required to perserve the spirit of religion! Have none of us cause to complain—"They made me keeper of the vineyards; but *mine own vineyard have I not kept?*"* Does not the cultivation of the wilderness sometimes lead us to neglect to overlook the growth of the weeds within our garden? Are we never satisfied with being the instruments of grace, without being habitually the subjects of it? Yet of how little moment is it to "minister grace to the hearers," if we minister it not to ourselves! Conscience must be often rebuked by the assumed identity of our personal and official character. For, though the concentration of our employments in Divine things has clothed us officially with a spiritual garb,† yet who of us can have failed to discover, that spirituality of doctrine is not always connected with corresponding spirituality of heart or conduct? The best of us probably are far more spiritual in our pulpits than in our closets, and find less effort required to preach against all the sins of our people, than to mortify one of them in our own hearts. Oh! how much more easy is it to preach from the understanding than from the heart! to expound the truth with satisfactory clearness to our people, and with delusive complacency to ourselves, than to be ourselves so moulded into its spirit as to enjoy—a holy preparation of heart in the previous study of it—its heavenly savour at the time of the delivery, and its experimental and practical influence in the after recollection.

* Can. i. 6. †See Hosea ix. 7.

This difficulty springs out of the peculiar self-deception connected with our employment. We are apt to forget the Christian in the Minister. We study the Bible more as Ministers than as Christians—more to find matter for the instruction of our people, than food for the nourishment of our own souls; and thus we are in danger of becoming mere formalists in our sacred profession. Henry Martyn seems to have been tenderly conscious of this temptation. 'Every time,' he remarked—'that I open the scriptures, my thoughts are about a sermon or exposition, so that even in private I seem to be reading in public.' Nothing can be more instructive than to mark the godly jealousy, with which this devoted Christian watched against the subtle influence of this temptation. 'I see,'—he observes at a later period—'how great are the temptations of a Missionary to neglect his own soul. Apparently outwardly employed for God, my heart has been growing more hard and proud. *Let me be taught that the first great business on earth is the sanctification of my own soul; so shall I be rendered more capable also of performing the duties of the Ministry in a holy solemn manner.*'* It is plain that we cannot live by feeding others, or heal ourselves by the mere employment of healing our people; and therefore by this course of official service our familiarity with the awful realities of death and eternity may be like that of the grave-digger, the physician, and the soldier,

* Martyn's Life, pp. 60, 263, 264. The same spirit of incessant watchfulness was exercised in the work of translations—'May the Lord in mercy to my soul save me from setting up an idol of any sort in his place, as I do by *preferring even a work professedly for him, to communion with him.* "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Let me learn from this, that to follow the direct injunctions of God about my own soul is more my duty, than to be engaged in other works, under pretence of doing him service.' P. 272.

rather than of the man of God, who, viewing eternity with deep seriousness and concern, has much to bring to his people of what he has gathered in his heavenly contemplations. It has been well remarked——that 'when once a man begins to view religion not as of personal, but merely of professional importance, he has an obstacle in his course with which a private Chistian is unacquainted.'* It is indeed difficult to determine, whether our familiar intercourse with the things of God is more our temptation or our advantage. For what accurate self-observer has not verified Butler's remarks on the repetition of passive impressions,† and found the effect of formal Ministerial repetition to be of a rapidly and powerfully hardening character?'‡ As the natural consequence of going through the daily and Sabbath routine of employment without renewed fire from the altar, the doctrines of the Gospel will be maintained, while the assimilation of our character to their heavenly spirit will be totally neglected. And in the absence of this spiritual character—what is our Ministry more than a beautiful and correct mechanism, without living or quickening influence, unvisited by the Spirit of God, and unblest with the tokens of his acceptance?

* Wilks's Essay on Conversion and Unconversion in Christian Ministers, p. 14. † Analogy, Part i. ch. 5.

‡ Massillon speaks with awful solemnity of the case of a formal Minister—'He contracts a callousness by his insensible way of handling Divine matters, by which he becomes hardened against them, and by which he is so far put out of the reach of conviction, in all the ordinary means of grace, that it is *scarce possible* he can *ever be awakened*, and by *consequence that he can be saved*.' Not less awful is the language of Dr. Owen—'He that would go down to the pit in peace, let him obtain a great repute for religion; let him preach and labour to make others better than he is himself, and in *the mean time neglect to humble his heart to walk with God in a manifest holiness and usefulness. and he will not fail of his end*.' Sermons and Tracts, folio. p. 47.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEFECT OF FAMILY RELIGION; AND THE WANT OF CONNEXION OF THE MINISTER'S FAMILY WITH HIS WORK.

THE qualifications necessary for a Christian Bishop were evidently meant to apply to the lower orders of the Ministry. And not among the least important are those which mark the Christian Minister in his family government. 'A family,' as Quesnel beautifully observes—'is a small diocese, in which the first essays are made of the Episcopal and Ecclesiastical zeal, piety, and prudence.'* If therefore "a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?"† Our Church fully recognizes the importance of this subject in demanding of each of her candidates for the holy office a distinct pledge of family godliness—'Will you be diligent to frame and fashion your own selves and your families according to the doctrine of Christ, and to make both yourselves and them, as much as in you lieth, wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ? I will apply myself thereto, the Lord being my helper.'‡ It was a frequent petition

* Quesnel on 1 Tim. iii. 12. † 1 Tim. iii. 5.

‡ Service for Ordination of Deacons. 'This is the injunction of the Apostle, 1 Tim. iii. 12. And the same command was enforced by the ancient laws of the church, which were much stricter concerning Clergyman's wives, children, and servants, than those of the laity. The houses of Ministers should be the schools of virtue, little emblems of a church, and patterns for all their parishioners, of peace and good order, sobriety and devotion.' Comber. Compare also Dr. Nicholls, in Bishop Mant's notes on the service.

of the excellent Philip Henry in his family worship—'That we might have grace to carry it as a Minister, and a Minister's wife, and a Minister's children, and a Minister's servant, should carry it, *that the Ministry might in nothing be blamed.*'* The testimony on this point of one of the most determined enemies of Christianity is remarkable. The Emperor Julian in endeavouring to re-establish Paganism—and accounting, as he declares, the 'strictness and sanctity professed by Christians, one of the main causes of the prevalence of their faith, gives directions (unquestionably copied from the injunctions to the primitive priesthood) that the heathen priests should be men of serious temper and deportment—that they be neither expensive nor showy in their dress—go to no entertainments, but such as are made by the worthiest persons—never be seen at the public games and spectacles—and *take care that their wives and children and servants be pious as well as themselves.*' *Fas est et ab hoste doceri.* Archbishop Secker thus briefly applies this testimony 'Let not, I entreat you, this apostate put you to shame.'† The family of Eli,‡ illustrates the necessity of the regulation, that an elder must be one, 'having faithful children.'§ If he cannot convey grace to his children, at least he can enforce restraint, and acquit himself of the guilt of "honouring his sons before God."‖ He can inculcate upon them the responsibility of a consistent conduct of promoting the design of his Ministry—the importance of 'adorning not only their Christian

* Life, ut supra, p. 81.

† Jul. Epist. 49, ad Arsac, p. 430, 431. Fragm. Epist. pp. 301—305. Secker's Charges, pp. 244, 245.

‡ 1 Sam. ii. 17. iii. 13. § Tit. i. 5, 6. ‖ 1 Sam. ii. 29.

profession, but their parent's principles, and of showing that the principles of their father's house and Ministry are the rule of their conduct.'*

Mr. Herbert's 'Country Parson† is very exact in the governing of his house, making it a copy and a model for his parish. His family is a school of religion.' This however opens a wide field—including daily exercises of family worship—the whole circle of family instruction—the principles of education, essentially Christian, and with a constant reference to a scriptural basis—the regulation of conversational habit within the domestic sphere—all bearing a concurrent testimony in confirmation of the doctrine of the pulpit *in its fullest detail.* The Ministerial character also should pervade the lower departments of the household. The pastoral work must enter into our family economy in the individual instruction of our servants, and in dealing with every member of the house, with spiritual inquiry and counsel, as if responsible for the care of their immortal interests.

In Bishop Hooper's family—'in every corner of the house there was some smell of virtue, good example, honest conversation, and scripture reading.'‡ Of Mr. Joseph Alleine—an admirable pattern of a Christian Pastor—it is said—'that as he walked about the house, he would make some spiritual use of every thing that did occur, and his lips did drop like the honey-comb to all that were about him.'§ The economy of Philip Henry's family exhibited the most beautiful and complete display of Christian godliness, simplicity, and order, constructed upon the patriarchal

* Richmond's Life, pp. 294, 295. † Chap. x.
‡ Clark's Marrow of Ecclesiastical History, p. 222, and Fox's Life of Hooper. § Alleine's Life and Letters, pp. 97—100.

principle of "commanding his children and household after him, that they should keep the way of the Lord, to do judgment and justice."* It is a serious responsibility, that the whole system of the domestic circle is the subject of daily observation. Its correctness is the standard of duty. Its inconsistency furnishes excuse for the neglect of duty, or the positive indulgence of sin. The detail of family religion is also a component part of the Christian Ministry, inculcating principles of parental restraint and dutiful subjection—the necessity of constant instruction snd superintendence—of precept illustrated by example, and of the daily exhibition in the domestic circle of the habits of Christian self-denial, holiness, cheerfulness, and love. Now if the parsonage does not show the pattern as well as the doctrine, exhortations from thence will only excite the ridicule and offence

* Gen. xviii. 19. Compare Philip Henry's Life, pp. 82—86. Cotton Mather's family picture is less known. He prayed for each of his children distinctly—interested them early with engaging stories from Scripture, as the vehicle of inculcating lessons of practical usefulness. He had always a word for his children, when they fell in his way. Their habits of secret prayer were early formed, and often brought to mind—'Child, don't forget every day to go alone and pray, as you have been taught.' He endeavoured to enlarge their minds in Christian love, by engaging them daily in some 'Essay to do good' for one another. He encouraged and commended them, when he saw them take pleasure in it, and let them know that a backwardness to it was highly displeasing to him. When they were old enough, he would take them alone one by one, and after many affectionate and solemn charges, to fear God, to love Christ, and to hate sin, he would let them witness his earnest melting prayer on their account. He catechised them on every part of the Gospel, turning every truth into a question, as the best way of gaining their attention, of informing their minds upon it, and applying it to their hearts. One cannot wonder that such consistency and diligence in the domestic Ministry was associated with uncommon power in his public work. The pattern expounded the doctrine with irresistible force of application and encouragement.

of the ungodly, and confirm them in their habits of sin. Indeed instances are not a few, where the power of a faithful Ministry—even with the seal of personal consistency—has been utterly paralyzed from the absence of the holy stamp of the sacred office upon the family economy.* It is therefore of no small moment, that expensiveness of habits, studied attention to ornament, and every mark of "the course of this world's pleasure or vanity should be repressed—not only or chiefly upon the ground of pecuniary inconvenience, but from the impressions that would be made upon our people—most prejudicial to the influence of the Ministry.

The Apostle notices the example of the Minister's wife in gravity, self-control, sobriety of deportment, and faithful exhibition of relative and public duties in connexion with the great objects of the Christian Ministry.† Mr. Fletcher mentions the custom of some of the foreign Protestant Churches of condemning the Minister himself for the faults of his wife. Thus in the Protestant churches of Hungary, they degrade a pastor whose wife indulges herself in cards, dancing, or any other public amusements, which bespeak the gaiety of a lover of the world rather than the gravity of a Christian matron. This severity springs from the supposition, that the woman, having promised obedience to her husband, can do nothing but what he either directs or approves. Hence they conclude, that, example having a greater weight than precept, the wife of a Minister, if she is inclined to the world, will preach worldly compliance with more success

* See some striking matter of conviction on 'suspicious appearances in a Minister's Family,' in 'Negative Rules given to a Young Minister.'—Cecil's Remains. † 1 Tim. iii. 11.

by her conduct, than her husband can preach the renunciation of the world by the most solemn discourses. And the incredulity of the stumbled flock will always be the consequence of that unhappy inconsistency, which is observable between the serious instructions of a well-disposed Minister, and the trifling conduct of a woman, with whom he is so intimately connected.'*

But does the exemplification of Christian consistency constitute the whole requirement of the domestic economy? Is there no superadded obligation of direct subserviency to the grand design of the Ministry? It has been well remarked by a living Minister, (whose domestic and parochial character gives just weight to his observation,) that '*a Clergyman's family*, house, occupations, and every thing connected with him, should be consistent, and *all family arrangements made subordinate to his parochial duties.*'† The routine of the family must be conducted (of course with due regard to prudential circumstances) upon the principle of subordinating convenience, indulgence, and worldly engagements to the main object—the allowance of the largest scope for the various schemes of Ministerial exercise, and for the most advantageous points of contact with the flock.

* Fletcher's Portrait of St Paul, p. 129, note—'A Minister's public labours are intimately connected with his private and domestic consolations. A Minister's wife may be a main-spring of encouragement or discouragement to her husband in all his arduous and anxious occupations for the good of his flock. On her example and demeanour very much may often depend.' Letter of Rev. L. Richmond to his daughter, on the day of her marriage to a Clergyman Life, p. 511.

† Parochial Duties practically illustrated, (Seeleys and Hatchard,) a most interesting and exciting sketch of Ministerial devotedness.

And how does this subject remind us of the momentous responsibility connected with the Minister's marriage choice! Apart from the grounds of a Christian's decision, according to the Scripture rule—"Only in the Lord,"* there are motives of a less selfish character, that should influence a Minister's determination. The character of his Ministry will be formed, or moulded, by this critical change of circumstances. He will not be the man he was: he will be under the constraint of new inclinations and principles of action.† His people will be most materially affected by his new relation. If they are not benefited by the change, they must suffer loss. Even a Christian connexion may cripple his energies, (if from natural hindrances, adventitious disadvantages, or spiritual causes, there is a want of experience, sympathy, and help in his work,) and he will be less of a Minister than before—less excited, less interested, less unfettered, less efficient.‡ Surely if a Minister should stamp *every act* of his life not only with the impress of a Christian, but with the high dignity, singleness, and elevation of his sacred office—how much more this act, which must prove the crisis of his course, the grand momentum of his future operations! If the sense of his awful responsibility has ever awakened

* 1 Cor. vii. 39. † Ib. 32, 33.

‡ 'It is scarcely to be calculated,' remarks Mr. Cecil, 'what an influence the spirit of a Minister's wife will have on his own, and on all his Ministerial affairs. If she come not up to the full standard, she will so far impede him, derange him, unsanctify him. If there is such a thing as good in the world, it is in the Ministerial office. The affairs of this employment are the greatest in the world. In prosecuting these with a right spirit, the Minister keeps in motion a vast machine; and such are the incalculable consequences of his wife's character to him, that, if she assist him not in urging forward the machine, she will hang as a dead weight upon its wheels.'—Cecil's Remains.

the complaint—"I am not able to bear all this people *alone*, because it is too heavy for me," may he not expect in the course of Providence and in answer to prayer, the gift of one, who may stand to him as the seventy elders of Israel to Moses—endued with his spirit, for the express purpose of "bearing the burden of the people with him, that he *bear it not himself alone?*"* There is, or ought to be, this difference between a Christian and a Ministerial choice. A Christian wants a helpmeet for himself—a Minister wants *besides* a yoke-fellow in his work: he wants for his people as well as for himself. It cannot be doubted but that the Christian Ministry has been greatly weakened by the dissociation of the Minister's wife from the service of the Lord. In every sphere there are departments peculiarly fitted for her.—Circumstances of propriety often (as in the female department of instruction) hinder the Minister from acting up to the full extent of his responsibility. In other circumstances, a press of labour, or interference with other avocations of immediate call and urgent necessity, render the counsel and active services of a true yoke-fellow of most important advantage. Where, therefore, a mistake was made in the original choice of a partner, or where a sense of Ministerial responsibility is unfelt,† much of the ground lies

* See Num. xi. 11—17. with Prov. xviii. 22. xix. 14. Mr. Baxter thus solved the question—'Ought a clergyman to marry?' 'Yes; but *let him think, and think, and think again, before he does it.*' Adherence to this rule, acted out in prayer for divine direction, will be not less instrumental to personal comfort than to Ministerial usefulness.

† Let us mark the female obligations of the Ministry, at once confirmed and encouraged by a death-bed testimony—'When eternity was full in view, and when she expected to stand shortly before the bar of God, she could and did say—'I have laboured for the parish: yes, I have laboured for the parish; and, if the Lord

unbroken, or imperfectly cultivated, and much promise of an abundant harvest is blighted. A Minister's wife may indeed be a mother of a family, and bound with personal responsibilities, over which there is no control. But may not time (the extent of which indeed conscience must determine) be redeemed for the work of the Lord without entrenching upon other most imperious claims? Should she not aspire to the honour of being a spiritual as well as a natural mother? Should she have no connexion with her husband's spiritual family? Should she not desire to be a partner of his Ministry as well of his life? Is she content, by dissociating herself from his public work, to share but *half his sympathy*, to bear but a *very small portion of his burdens?* Her characteristic should be the main feature of the gospel—*a disciple of the cross.* In uniting herself to a Christian Minister she has bound herself to his work and to his cross; and must expect—*as far as she appears by her husband's side*—not only to sympathize, but actually to share, in the double measure of hardness, misrepresentation, and reproach, portioned out to the faithful Minister: trials, that will exercise all those habits of love, humility, patience, and self-denial that constitute the spirit of the cross. Nothing connected with her can be neutral. Should she wrap herself up in cold indifference to the advancement of her husband's Ministry, regardless of the line of conduct best adapted to strengthen his

spare my life, I will *labour more for it than I have ever yet done.*' Funeral Sermon for Mrs. Bolland, wife of Rev. W. Bolland, Swineshead, Lincolnshire. This instance, among many others, may show, that, if there is no express letter of Scripture requirement upon this subject, the obligation is acknowledged and felt to be legitimately inferred from the post which the Minister's wife officially and relatively occupies in the Church of Christ.

most important interests—or even should she "faint and be weary" *of the work rather than in it*, she must clog the wheels of the machine, instead of supplying oil for its accelerated progress. Any lack also of kindness or consideration on her part widens the distance between the pastor and his flock, and restrains many of those sources of Ministerial communication, which are the fruitful channels of mutual enlargement and support. On the other hand, by a natural spirit of conciliation and flow of sympathy much is drawn forth with freedom, that otherwise had been restrained,* and forms an additional bond of reciprocal attachment between the father and his numerous family. Thus is the confidence of the female part of our charge obtained—opening to us a most interesting medium of pastoral intercourse, and a most valuable pledge of permanent and extensive usefulness. Even under unhappy personal circumstances, not unfrequently has the dignity and usefulness of the Ministry been sustained by the weight of female responsibility; nor are instances wanting of this manifest, extensive, and important influence, which have made it a doubtful question, whether the Minister or his partner were most useful in the pastoral charge.† Happy indeed is the pastor, whose partner is thus the mother of his people, as well as the director and guardian in his family

* Cotton Mather mentions an interesting instance of this in a Minister's wife—that the women would freely 'open their griefs' to her, 'who, acquainting her husband with convenient intimations thereof, occasioned him in his public Ministry more *particularly* and profitably to discourse on those things that were of everlasting benefit.' Mather's New England, Book iii. p. 17.

† An instance lately came within the writer's knowledge, where the devoted labours of a Minister's wife, lately deceased, in a parochial sphere, attended with much personal inconvenience, were honoured with no less than eleven instances of decided conversion to God.

circle. Happy indeed must he be in offering his grateful acknowledgment for this special mercy to himself and to his flock.

May the Writer be permitted further to suggest, that the pastor's family worship should partake of the character of a ministration to his people. Such was the character of Philip Henry's daily exercises,* and, in later times, of the late excellent Mr. Scott†—exercises that appear to have been attended with a remarkable blessing, and of which, happily for us, most valuable details are preserved. Ought not a Minister in his general course to offer to his household something beyond the formal routine, in the way of familiar, close, and affectionate exhortation? And might not the circle of instruction extend beyond the bounds of the parsonage—to any, that might be willing to improve the advantage? It may be doubted whether the mere reading of excellent expositions is suitable to our office, or likely to be impressive in effect. For none of them can supply, in the manner or matter of address, that adaptation to the different shades of character, and the ever-varying circumstances of the family, which seem necessary to give power and interest to the daily repetition of the social worship. The family use of Scott's Commentary was probably intended chiefly for the assistance of the laity, or, in the clerical use of the work, to supply solid and full materials for *free exposition.* The Ministerial qualification "apt to teach," and the character of "a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," supposes an ability to "bring

* Philip Henry's Life, pp. 72—81. Mr. Wesley, in recommending Philip Henry's Life to his people, pointed out his mode of conducting family worship as a pattern.

† Scott's Life, pp. 71—76.

forth out of our treasure things new and old," for daily as well as Sabbath ministrations.* Oh! how do we need the spirit of prayer, and the active habit of faith, constantly to maintain our watchfulness in "neglecting not," and our diligence in "stirring up," for daily use, "the gift of God that is in us by the putting on of hands."† The exercise of our spiritual gifts is closely connected with our personal happiness and ministerial fruitfulness. Every fresh exercise links us to our people with "a cord" of reciprocal feeling, that "is not quickly broken; and proves the appointed means of opening their hearts to the reception of the more established enjoyment of the truth. Our sphere of parochial labour in every department becomes an overspreading "shadow," inviting our people to "dwell under it;"‡ so that, in the recollection of its enlivening refreshment, they are ready to adopt Philip Henry's exclamation at the close of the Sabbath—"Well, if this be not the way to heaven, I do not know what is.'§

CHAPTER X.

WANT OF FAITH.

The Baptist Missionary Society was raised upon two simple ideas, suggested by Dr. Carey in a sermon upon

* 1 Tim. iii. 2. Matt. xiii. 52. An American divine encouraged his son to these familiar exercises with the assurance, that he had found as much advantage by them as by most of his other studies in divinity; adding, that he looked upon it as the Lord's gracious accomplishment of that word—"Shall I *hide any thing* from Abraham? *For* I know Abraham, that he will command," &c. Mather's New England, iii. 150.

† 1 Tim. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6.

‡ Alluding to Hos. xiv. 7. § Philip Henry's Life, p. 192.

Isaiah liv. 2, 3, shortly before his embarcation for India —'Expect great things—attempt great things.' This expectation is the life of faith—the vitality of the Ministry—that which honours God, and is honoured by God. All our failures may be ultimately traced to a defect of faith. We ask but for little, we expect but little, we are satisfied with little, and therefore we gain and do but little.* Our Saviour called this principle into exercise in almost all his miracles, and his Almighty power appeared to be fettered by the want of it.† Nor was its power limited to miraculous influence. Believing prayer was assured with the largest tokens of acceptance ;‡ and the rule of the distribution of the Divine favour was unchangeably established—"According to your faith be it unto you."§ The life of faith, therefore, is the life of the Minister's work, and the spring of his success.

A confidence, indeed, that has no foundation in the Divine promise is not faith but fancy. But the ground of Ministerial faith, is the engagement, purpose, and promise of God, confirmed to us by his special pledge. "*The zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall perform this.*"‖ Much would be expected from this determined and fervid principle in human hearts, though so often misguided, disproportionate, and uncertain. But how overwhelming is the thought of this affection possessing the heart of God—of the deep interest of his infinite mind in the progress of the kingdom of his Son—

* Mr. Scott remarks, in a letter to his Son—'I must be allowed to think that we *have not* success, because we *ask not*, and do not stir up others to expect and ask the blessing from God only.' Life, p. 393.

† Comp. Matt. viii. 2, 3. ix. 2. Mark xi. 22, 23. with Matt. xiii. 58. Mark vi. 5, 6.

‡ Comp. Matt. xxi. 22. § Matt. ix. 29. ‖ Isaiah ix. 7.

his thoughts engaged in it—his unsearchable plans embracing it, and controlling all the mighty movements of the world to subserve this main design. How solid therefore is the rock, on which the Christian Ministry rests, as the grand engine for the accomplishment of the purposes and promises of God!*

The extreme difficulty of the exercise of faith is not however readily apprehended. Sometimes we see a sinking and faint heart, where better things might have been expected. Jeremiah's case is most instructive to young Ministers—bold in public, but giving way in secret; full of compassionate weepings over the misery of his people, but "pressed above measure" under the power of his own unbelief.†

The habit of faith in the Christian Ministry requires peculiar simplicity to realize its full efficiency. This work is continually hindered by a dependance on our own resources, instead of constantly "receiving of the fulness" of our Head, who "hath the residue of the Spirit," as the fountain and grand repository for his Church.‡ This spirit of self-dependence proves equal ignorance of ourselves and of our work. Who are we, to call to the dead to arise to a new and spiritual life? Where is the quickening virtue, either in ourselves or in them? Where then is our hope of success, irrespective of our reliance upon Almighty power? The same lack of simplicity leads us to trust to hopeful appearances, rather than to the plain and repeated declarations of the Divine promise. We are ready to

* Calvin remarks on this ground, that Ministers should go up into the pulpit to preach the word of God in his name, with that strength of faith as to be assured, that their doctrine can no more be overthrown than God himself.—Comment on 2 Cor. iii.

† Comp. Jer. ix. with xx. &c.

‡ Comp. Col. i. 19, with John i. 14, 16. iii. 34.

say of some bright momentary prospect, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work :"* so that when "we see not our signs,"† or when, "as the morning cloud and the early dew," they have gone away, we are on the verge of despondency. Now if the promises were the *ground*, and favourable appearances only *the encouragements*, of our hope, our minds would be preserved in an equipoise of faith, dependent and sustained under every variation of circumstance, "rejoicing in hope" amid the withering blasts of disappointment, and even "against hope believing in hope, strong in faith, giving glory to God. But from the want of a due recollection, it is more easy to exercise a personal than a Ministerial faith, though the warrant in both cases is the same; though the principle of faith is of equal power of application to every exigency; and though the training for the discipline of the Ministerial warfare is obviously one of the many benefits arising out of our personal trials.

The main difficulty, however, is not in the work of the Ministry, but in ourselves; in the conflict with our own unbelief, either in the form of indolence or self-dependence. When faith is really brought into action, the extent and aggravation of the difficulty, even were it increased an hundred-fold, is a matter of little comparative moment. Difficulties heaped upon difficulties can never rise to the level of the promise of God. To meet the trembling apprehensions of weakness and unbelief—"Who is sufficient for these things?" the answer is ready—"Our sufficiency is of God."‡ There is a link in the chain of moral causes and effects, which connects the helplessness

* Gen. v. 29. † Psalm lxxiv. 9. ‡ 2 Cor. ii. 16. iii. 5.

of the creature with the Onipotence of God, and encourages the creature to attempt every thing in the conscious inability to do any thing; and thus "in weakness" thoroughly felt, Divine "strength is made perfect."* It is most important not to lose sight of our abasement, but at the same time to maintain it with a corresponding and proportionate exercise of faith. Let us lie low, and look high; let us look at our own weakness and strength at the same moment; let there be a remembrance, as well as present exercise, of faith. The apostle supported his mind under the pressure of his responsibilities, not merely by his general interest in the Divine sufficiency, but by the recollection of what it had wrought in him.† This recollection will assure us of the sufficiency of Divine grace; and that, though the work immensely exceeds all human resources, the power and promise of God are fully equal, and faithfully pledged, to the exigency. No difficulty is therefore insurmountable. Our Master has invested the principle of faith with his own omnipotence.‡ The least grain will remove a mountain from its place.§ What then would not a large grain, what would not many grains—do? If the weakest exercise is so mighty, what might not be expected from the habit of faith? Do we not see more beauty in the disciples' prayer, and more need of it in ourselves—"Increase our faith?"||

* 2 Cor. xii. 9. † Ib. iii. 5, 6—"who also *hath made us*," &c.
‡ Mark ix. 23.
§ Compare Matt. xvii. 20. 'There are, perhaps, but few Ministers of Christ,' observes Quesnel on this verse—'to whom, on their addresses to him in prayer, he might not answer, that the weakness of their faith is an hindrance to the conversion and improvement of souls.'
|| Luke xvii. 5.

We are apt to say of certain departments of our work, such as the visiting of the sick, or the instruction of the young—'I have no gift, no talent for it.' But surely the exercise of faith upon the promise of heavenly wisdom,* would in ordinary cases obtain a competent measure to meet the demand. Or should it even be withheld, it would be a most humbling and profitable exercise of faith—"most gladly to glory in our infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon us."† But nothing is more paralyzing to faith—nothing more clogs the wheels of exertion, than repining indolence indulged under the cover of humility. We are apt in times of despondency to feel, as if we had been of no use in the work, because no present fruit springs up before us. But have we not a warrant to make the greatest attempts with the fullest assurance of ultimate success? The thought of the breath of a worm instrumentally saving an immortal soul, (a work of far higher consideration in the eye of God than the temporal welfare of the universe,) proves the Divinely appointed means (independent of Divine agency) to be as inadequate to the proposed effect, as were the rod of Moses, the brazen serpent, the trumpets of Joshua, the pitchers of Gideon, or the prophesying of Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones. But their very weakness was the display of the power of God, and the excitement to the exercise of faith; and the neglect of the means in the cases referred to, would have been fatal to their effects. In this light the Scripture speaks of discouragements as "the trials of faith." And when has God ever put honour upon the faith which he has not first tried? Or when has he failed to honour it in, or

* James i. 5. † 2 Cor. xii. 9.

after, the trial?* And thus, as mementos of our weakness, and excitements of our faith, discouragements prove the channels of spiritual strength to ourselves, and of spiritual blessings to our people.

It is most important habitually to contemplate the Ministry in its proper character as a "work of faith." It is only this view, that enlivens with Christian courage, and Christian hope. Unbelief looks at the difficulty. Faith regards the promise. Unbelief therefore makes it a work of bondage. Faith realises it as a "labour of love." Unbelief drags on in sullen despondency. Faith makes the patience, with which it is content to wait for success, "the patience of hope."† As there is no difficulty, that (as we have hinted,) is not traceable to unbelief, there is none that will not ultimately be overcome by the perseverance of faith. If therefore we would gain an active and powerful spring of renewed exertion, we must strike our roots deeper into the soil of faith. The work will ever prosper or decline, as we depend upon an Almighty arm, or an arm of flesh.‡ Few, probably, even of the most devoted servants of God, had *duly* counted the cost, before they put their hand to the plough; and it is the want of these preparatory exercises of faith, that occasions that oppressive faintness of heart, which gives the enemy such advantage in distressing our peace,

* It is not faith, but "*the trial of faith*," that will be "found to praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Christ."—1 Peter i. 7.

† 1 Thess. i. 3.

‡ Many of us can feelingly enter into Brainerd's experience, both in its depressions and subsequent elevations. 'Oh! how heavy,' says he, 'is my work when *faith* cannot take hold of an *Almighty arm* for the performance of it. Many times have I been ready to sink in this case. *Blessed be God, that I may repair to a full fountain.*'

and enfeebling our exertions. But after all, the grand secret is habitually to have our eye upon Christ, and our heart with him. Diligent labour and patient expectations comprise the spirit of the Ministry. Wait and work are the two watch-words, not to be separated. Waiting will supply strength for work, and such working shall "not be vain in the Lord."

But we must not forget to remark the suprême importance of the *Ministerial exercise of faith in its own character and office,* as substantiating unseen realities to the mind. The grand subjects of our commission have an immediate connexion with the eternal world. The soul derives its value from its relation to eternity.* The preciousness of the Saviour is felt, in opening to the view and assuring to the heart a blissful prospect of eternity.† The sufferings of this present time are supported by an habitual contemplation of "things not seen,"‡ and by an estimate of the preponderating "glory that shall be revealed in us."§ The vanity of this transitory scene is realized only by an accurate comparison with the enduring character of the heavenly state.‖ Daily experience reminds us of the extreme difficulty of maintaining spiritual perceptions of eternal things. The surrounding objects of time and sense spread a thick film over the organs of spiritual vision, and the indistinct haziness in which they often appear is as if they were not. Now these momentous realities vividly presented to the mind, are the principles of earnest devotedness to our work. 'Faith,' as Mr. Cecil admirably remarks, 'is the master-spring of a Minister. Hell is before me, and thousands of souls are shut up there in everlasting agonies. Jesus Christ stands forth

* Matt. xvi. 26. † John iii. 16. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.
§ Rom. viii. 18. ‖ 1 John ii. 15—17.

to save men from rushing into this bottomless abyss. He sends me to proclaim his ability and his love. I want no fourth idea! Every fourth idea is contemptible. Every fourth idea is a grand impertinence."*

We must also remark on the *personal assurance of faith* as the spring of Ministerial effectiveness. "We are confident," says the Asostle, "*wherefore* we labour."† The "knowledge whom he had believed," was the support under his sufferings, and the encouragement to his perseverance.‡ The assurance "whose he was" enabled him to state with greater confidence—"Whom I serve."§ And who does not find that "the joy of the Lord," the joy of pardon—of acceptance—of communion—and of expectation—"is our strength"‖ for our work in simple, affectionate, and devoted faith.

Upon the whole then, we may conclude this subject with the consolatory remembrance of the character of the gracious and faithful Master whom we serve. Every faithful Minister has fellowship with Polycarp's ground of support, 'that he, who was constituted an *overseer* of the church, was himself overlooked by Jesus Christ.' Our Divine Master will make us sen-

* Cecil's Remains. 'He spake, observes Dr. Bates of Dr. Manton, 'as one that had a living faith within him of Divine truth. From this union of zeal, with his knowledge, he was excellently qualified to convince and convert souls.' 'We are so weak in the faith—is the greatest impediment of all. Hence it is, that, when we should set upon a man for his conversion with all our might, if there be not the stirrings of unbelief within us, whether there be a heaven and a hell, yet at least the belief of them is so feeble, that it will scarcely excite in us a kindly, resolute, constant zeal, so that our whole motion will be but weak, because the spring of faith is so weak. O what need therefore have Ministers for themselves and their work, to look well to their faith, especially that their assent to the truth of Scripture, about the joys and torments of the life to come, be sound and lively!'—Reformed Pastor.

† 2 Cor. v. 8, 9. ‡ 2 Tim. i. 12.

§ Acts xxvii. 23. ‖ Neh. viii. 10.

sible of our weakness, but he will not suffer us to faint under it. Our store of sufficiency is treasured up in his inexhaustible fulness, while our insufficiency is covered in his compassionate acceptance. He engages to supply not only rules and directions, but ability and grace for our momentous work. And if he blesses us with a dependent spirit, a single eye, and a single heart, to make an unreserved surrender of ourselves and our talents to his service, every apprehended difficulty will be overcome, and we shall "go on our way rejoicing" in our work. But the power of unbelief will be matter of daily conflict to the end. We shall probably find it our chief hindrance. It will induce a faintness under want of success, or self-confidence under apparent usefulness; in either case inverting the Scripture order of life and comfort, and leading us to "walk" by sight, not "by faith;" so that the Saviour, so to speak, cannot do *many* mighty works among us, *because of our unbelief.*"*

The Writer submits this extended detail to his brethren, under the profitable conviction of its application to himself, and with the strong persuasion, that the hindrances alluded to are most detrimental to our own souls, and most prejudicial to our public usefulness. The main secret of Ministerial success, is to bring the spirit and unction of the Gospel into our public and private Ministrations. He would take, therefore, the excellent advice of Bishop Burnet—'more particularly to examine himself, whether he has that soft and gentle, that meek and humble, and that charitable and compas-

* Matt. xiii. 58. Mark vi. 5, 6. ut supra.

sionate temper, which the Gospel does so much press upon all Christians, that shined so eminently through the whole life of the blessed Author of it, and which he has so singularly recommended to all his followers, and that has in it so many charms and attractives, which do not only commend those who have these amiable virtues, but, which is much more to be regarded, they give them vast advantages in recommending the doctrine of our Saviour to their people.'* The want of Christian consistency obscures to our people the credentials of our Divine commission. For though we may find it expedient confidently and successfully to vindicate the lawfulness of our ecclesiastical call, yet it is the faithfulness, humility, constancy, and self-denial, and tenderness of our Ministrations, that will *chiefly* lead them—"so to *account of* us, as the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the mysteries of God,"† Bishop Burnet mentions the wise counsel given to him at an early period of his Ministry, to combine with the Ecclesiastical study of the primitive church, a view of their solemn sense of Ministerial obligation, conceiving 'that the argument in favour of the Church, however clearly made out, would never have its full effect upon the world, till we could show a primitive spirit in our administration, as well as a primitive pattern for our constitution.' 'This advice,' adds the Bishop, 'made even then a *deep impression on me, and I thank God, the sense of it has never left me in the whole course of my studies.*'‡ Indeed every pastor must feel that

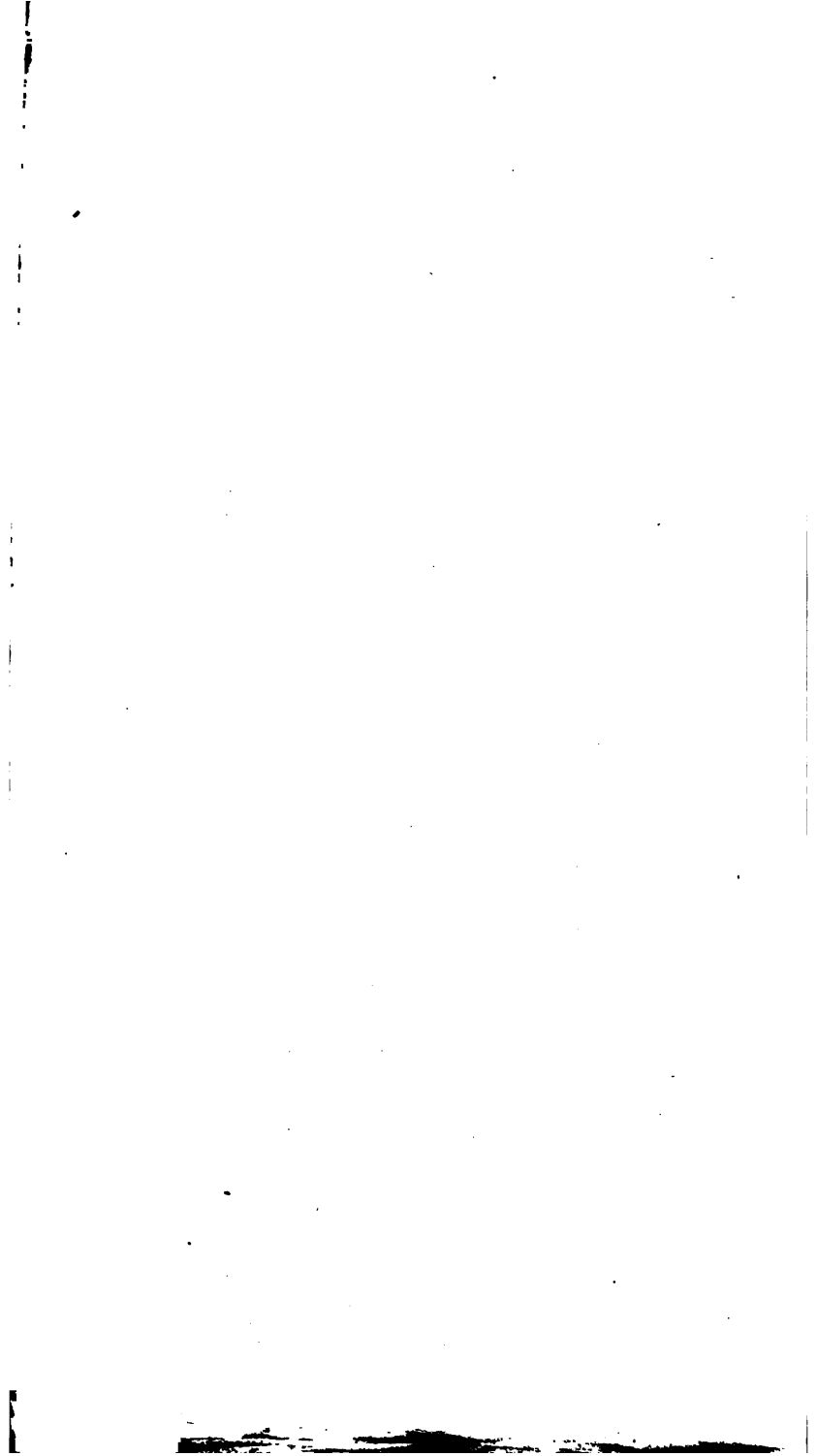
* Pastoral Care, chap vii. † 1 Cor. iv. 1.

‡ Pastoral Care, chap. iv. Nearly to the same purpose he remarks in another place—'Maintaining arguments for more power than we have, will have no effect, unless the world see that we make a good use of the authority already in our hands. It is with the Clergy as with Princes. The only way to keep the pre-

the regard and confidence of his people materially depends upon the general consistency of his character. They naturally "seek this proof of Christ speaking in us,"* to draw them to us with something of the impression with which "A Master in Israel" approached his Divine Teacher—"*We know*, that thou art a Teacher come from God."† Then indeed is our ministry much advanced among them, when they are thus led to "receive us as angels of God, even as Christ Jesus."‡

rogative from being uneasy to their subjects, and being disputed, is to manage it wholly for their good and advantage. Then all will be for it, when they find it is for them. Let the Clergy live and labour well, and they will feel as much authority will follow, as they will know how to manage well. They will never be secured or recovered from contempt, but by living and labouring as they ought.' Conclusion of the history of his own times.

* 2 Cor. xiii. 3. † John iii. 2. ‡ Gal. iv. 14.



PART IV.

THE PUBLIC WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

PART IV.

CAUSES OF WANT OF SUCCESS CONNECTED WITH THE PUBLIC MINISTRY.

THE Public Ministry of the Word is the most responsible part of our work—the most extensive engine of Ministerial operation—acting, not, like parochial visitations, upon individual cases, but with equal power of application to large numbers at the same moment. It is therefore, as Baxter has remarked —'A work that requireth greater skill, and especially greater life and zeal, than any of us bring to it.'* It deserves therefore a prominent and detailed consideration in passing over the ground of the Ministerial field, though a full discussion of its several particulars would furnish ample materials for a volume.

CHAPTER I.

THE INSTITUTION AND IMPORTANCE OF THE ORDINANCE OF PREACHING.

'BECAUSE therefore want of the knowledge of God is the cause of all iniquity amongst men, as contrariwise the ground of all our happiness, and the seed of whatsoever perfect virtue groweth from us, is a right opinion touching things Divine; this kind

* Reformed Pastor.

of knowledge we may justly set down for the first and chiefest thing, which God imparteth unto his people, and our duty of receiving this at his merciful hands for the first of those religious offices, wherewith we publicly honour him on earth. For the instruction therefore of all sorts of men to eternal life it is necessary, that the sacred and saving truth of God be openly published unto them. Which open publication of heavenly mysteries is by an excellency termed preaching.'* This institution belonged to the Jewish economy. Moses received his commission from the hands of God for the express purpose of the public instruction of the people,† and, when himself unequal to this work, seventy elders were set apart by Divine authority for his assistance.‡ Traces of this institution are discovered in the history of the chosen people, during the reign of their kings. It was expressly revived after the captivity, nearly according to the present mode§—marking the decent ceremonial of the occasion—its simplicity, deep solemnity, and peculiar adaptation for the purpose of instruction. Our Lord, as the Great Preacher of righteousness, employed this institution for his public work.‖ The Apostles allude to it historically as a standing ordinance from the beginning,¶ and used it as the medium of the communication of their Divine message.** Bingham shows it to have been continued in the Church, though with some interruption, from the primitive ages,†† and it is now established as the grand mean of uplifting the standard, and blowing the trumpet of the Gospel throughout the world.

* Hooker, Book, v. 18.
‡ Num. xi. 16, 24, 25.
‖ Luke iv. 16—21.
** Acts v. 20, 21.
† Exod. xxiv. 12.
§ See Neh. viii. 4—8.
¶ Acts xv. 21.
†† See his Antiquities.

The Ministry of our Lord illustrates the importance of this institution. It was the work for which he was anointed*—in which he was constantly employed†—and for which he ordained his Apostles‡—first limiting their commission within the precincts of Judea,§ afterwards extending it to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.‖

In conformity to this commission and to their Master's example—"daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ,"¶ and in enlarging the field of their labours among the Gentiles, they contemplated nothing short of the accomplishment of their Master's design in the preaching of the gospel "unto every creature which is under heaven."**

The purpose of God has constituted this ordinance the main instrument in the work of salvation.†† That is said of preaching, which is said of no other department of the work. Neither the administration of the sacraments—nor the reading of the Scriptures—nor the habit of secret prayer are invested with equal efficiency in the raising of the church of God. In the ordinary course of means it is of supreme necessity—"How shall they hear"—so as to believe—call upon the Lord—and be saved, "without a preacher? So then faith cometh by hearing, and

* Luke iv. 18, 43. † Ib. xix. 47,
‡ Mark iii. 14. § Matt. x. 5, 6.
‖ Matt. xxviii. 19. Mark xvi. 15. Luke xxiv. 47.
¶ Acts x. 42. ** Col. i. 23.

†† Comp. 1 Cor. i. 17, 18, 21. 'Prædicatio verbi est medium gratiæ divinitus institutum, quo res regni Dei publice et explicantur et applicantur populo ad salutem et ædificationem.' Bowles' Pastor Evangelicus 1655. Lib. ii. c. i.—a work of considerable value, as giving a serious, important, and detailed exposition of the Christian Ministry.

hearing by the word of God."* Archbishop Grindal in his celebrated remonstrance to Queen Elizabeth, upon her restraint upon his preaching exercises, well points out the supremacy of preaching in the Christian Ministry—'Public and continual preaching of God's word is the ordinary means and instrument of the salvation of mankind. St. Paul calls it "the Ministry of reconciliation" of man unto God. By preaching of God's word, the glory of God is enlarged, faith is nourished, and charity is increased. By it the ignorant is instructed, the negligent exhorted and incited, the stubborn rebuked, the weak conscience comforted, and to all those that sin of malicious wickedness, the wrath of God is threatened.'†

This view of the importance of preaching as the grand ordinance of God is confirmed by an able writer of the present day. 'Of all methods for diffusing religion, preaching is the most efficient. All other methods are indirect and preparatory; but the simple proclaiming of the Gospel has in all ages been attended with the most transforming efficacy, elevating the few, who have cordially accepted it, into a higher and happier state of being, and even raising the many who have rejected it into a better system of moral opinion. It is to preaching that Christianity owes its origin, its continuance, and its progress; and it is to itinerating preaching, however the ignorant may undervalue it, that we owe the conversion of the Roman world from paganism to primitive Christianity; our own freedom from the

* Rom. x. 14, 17.

† The whole of this letter is most admirable. It may be seen in Fuller's Church History, Book ix. and in Strype's Life of Grindal.

thraldom of Popery, in the success of the Reformation; and the revival of Christianity at the present day from the depression, which it had undergone, owing to the prevalence of infidelity and of indifference. Books, however excellent, require at least some previous interest on the part of the person, who is to open and to peruse them. But the preacher arrests that attention, which the written record only invites; and the living voice, and the listening numbers heighten the impression by the sympathy and enthusiasm which they excite; the reality which the truths spoken possess in the mind of the speaker, is communicated to the feelings of the hearers, and they end in sharing the same views, at least for the moment, and in augmenting each other's convictions.*

The judgment of the fathers of the church was in strict consonance with the view of our subject. Gregory Nazianzen insists upon preaching as 'the principal thing that belongs to us Ministers of the Gospel.† St. Augustine remarks it as the proper office of a bishop to preach.‡ No congregation in the primitive church seperated without being 'fed,' as Tertullian expresses it, 'with holy sermons.' Bishop Stillingfleet informs us, that even in the dark times of Popery, they were convinced of the necessity and usefulness of preaching, for that in the reign of Henry III. all parish priests were enjoined at a provincial synod, to 'instruct the people committed to their charge, and to feed them with the food of God's word,' and if they do not do it, they are styled by that synod, 'dumb dogs.'§ Erasmus, in making a comparison between the several distinct

* Douglas's Advancement of Society in Knowledge and Religion.
† πρωτον των ημετερων. Orat. I. ‡ De Offic. l. c. 1,
§ Duties and Rights of the Parochial Clergy, p. 15.

offices of the Ministry—thus give the pre-eminence to preaching—speaking of the Minister—'He is then in the very height of his dignity, when from the pulpit he feeds the Lord's flock with sacred doctrine.'* Mr. Thorndike, a writer of some authority on ecclesiastical matters, justly remarks—'that preaching in respect of personal performance, is the most excellent work bishops and presbyters are able to do in the service of God.'† Hooker gives his judgment to the same purport,—'So worthy a part of Divine service we should greatly wrong, if we did not esteem preaching as the blessed ordinance of God—sermons as keys to the kingdom of heaven, as wings to the soul, as spurs to the good affections of man, unto the sound and healthy as food, as physic unto diseased minds.'‡ It is remarked of Mr. Robinson of Leicester—that 'to preaching he always assigned the throne in the various and distinct offices of his Ministry. "Preach the word"—this he considered as the main article of his commission, which the nearest of the rest followed at a long interval. 'It is well,' he would say, 'to visit; it is well to show kindness; to make friendly; to instruct at home; to instruct at their own houses; to educate the children; to clothe the naked. But the pulpit is the seat of usefulness; souls are to be converted and built up there; no exertion must be allowed, which may have the effect of habitually deteriorating this—whatever else is done should be with the design and hope of making this more effective.'§

The historical review of this ordinance is interesting from its connexion with national prosperity, and the extension of scriptural knowledge and holiness. Asa

* Erasm. Eccles. Lib. i.
† See his Due Way of composing Differences.
‡ Book v. 22. § Vaughan's Life of Robinson, p. 297.

was reminded by his prophet, that the destitution of "a teaching priest" was marked by a time of national distress and vexation."* In the subsequent reign of Jehoshaphat we find the mission of Levites and Priests throughout all the cities, combined with the overflowing prosperity and establishment of the kingdom.† The comparative disuse of preaching was a concomitant mark of the dark ages of Popery, while its revival was coeval with the dawn and progress of the Reformation.

The object of the Reformers in completing the Book of Homilies, was to remove the obstruction to preaching, from the ignorance of the Clergy. Erasmus, as we have seen, appears to have been sensible of the importance of preaching. Bishop Stillingfleet notices his observation in his Ecclesiastes, that the sense of religion grows very cold without preaching, and that the Countess of Richmond, King Henry the Seventh's mother, had such a sense of the necessity of that office in those times, that she maintained many preachers at her own charges, and employed Bishop Fisher to find out the best qualified for it.'‡ The Council of Trent also designates this office with considerable emphasis, as the chief part of the Bishop's work.§

There appears therefore just ground for George Herbert's beautiful definition of his Country Parson's pulpit as 'his joy and his throne,'‖ invested with a dignity, solemnity, and efficiency peculiarly its own.

* Chron. xv. 3, 5. † Ibid. xvii. 5—12.

‡ Stillingfleet, ut supra, p. 206.

§ Prædicatio Evangelii ..... est præcipuum Episcoporum munus. Sess. v. Caput. 2.

‖ Country Parson, ch. vii.

CHAPTER II.

PREPARATION FOR THE PULPIT.

How honourable was the spirit of "the man after God's own heart," who could not endure the thought of offering unto the Lord his God "of that which did cost him nothing;"* and when, in the contemplation of the greatness of the work, and the majesiy of his God, he "prepared with all his might," and consecrated all his treasures, and all his service, "for the house of his God!"† Nor does his illustrious son appear to have devoted less preparation of heart and consecration of service to the building of the spiritual temple, than to that magnificent material temple, which was destined to be the glory of his nation, and the wonder of the world. To the one he devoted all the treasures of his kingdom; to the other, all the riches of his mind—"large and exceeding much, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore."‡ It is said, that "because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, *he gave good heed*, and *sought out*, and set in order many proverbs,"§ as if his whole soul was engaged in the work, and exercised to discover the best mode as well as the best substance of instruction, that his heavenly expressions might be clothed in suitable language, worthy of the great subject and its divine Author. Thus, though he found "much study a weariness to the flesh," yet he considered its advantages greatly to overbalance its toil; and, though the wisest of men, his sermons were the results of labour and study,

* 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.
† 1 Chron. xxix. 1—6.
‡ 1 Kings iv. 29.
§ Eccl. xii. 9.

as well as the exercise of his natural and spiritual gifts. And thus were his words—"as the words of the wise, goads" to stir the slothful to their duty, not only gaining the ear, and moving the affections, but fixing upon the memory, conscience, and judgment, "as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies."*

Such an example of serious and diligent preparation for public instruction it well becomes us to follow. For indeed, to habituate the mind to a constant recollection of the specific necessities of our people; to decide upon the course of scriptural doctrine, exhortation and comfort, that is best adapted to their case; to select the most appropriate vehicles for the presentment of the truth,—these are exercises of laborious and persevering diligence. Yet some will hold the necessity of pulpit preparation in very light esteem. A Bible and Concordance, with a few sermon-notes, or even the excitement of the moment, with the gift of tolerable fluency—these are thought a sufficient warrant to stand up in the name of the great God. That which is solid however, will alone be permanent No powers of imagination, natural eloquence, or vehement excitement, can compensate for the want of substantial matter. The "pastors after God's own heart" are such as "feed the people *with knowledge and understanding*."† But except there be a gathering proportionate to the expenditure, there can be no store of knowledge and understanding laid in for themselves, and consequently none for distribution to the nourishment of the people.

Preachers of this stamp are known by their utter

* Eccles. xii. 10—12.

† Jer. iii. 15. See the conclusion of Fenelon's First Dialogue on Eloquence.

want of variety. It is substantially not only (what it ought always to be) the same doctrine, but the same sermon—with a constant change of texts, but with scarcely the accession of a single new idea—*semper eadem.* Unlike the wise householder, they have no "treasure" out of which "to bring forth things new and old."* The "old" indeed always comes forth; but where is the "new?" Nor can this barrenness of thought be justly chargeable upon their resources. For there is no characteristic of Scripture more striking, than the constant variety of lights in which it presents one unvarying object. Of Bishop Jewell, his biographer writes—'that the more eminent he was in dignity, the more diligent in the work of the Ministry—not so much in frequent as in exquisite teaching. For, though his sermons were very frequent, yet they were always rare for the matter and manner of his delivery. The Roman orator tells us of '*negligentia quædam diligens*'—a certain negligent diligence and learned ignorance, when the speaker carefully shunneth all affectation of art, and laboureth that his speech may not seem elaborate. But the sober and discreet hearer hath often cause to complain of a *diligentia quædam negligens*—a negligent kind of diligence, in many popular preachers, who ascend frequently into the pulpit, but with extemporary provision, are often in travail but without pain, and delivered of nothing for the most but empty words: as if sermons were to be valued by the number and not by the weight. These men's sermons, though they exceed the hour in length, and the days of the week in number, yet they themselves lie open to the curse of the prophet, denounced against

* Matt. xiii. 52.

all those "that do the work of the Lord negligently." From all the danger of which malediction Jewell was freest of all his parts and place. For though he might best of any presume in this kind upon his multiplicity of reading, and continual practice of preaching, yet never would he preach in the meanest village, without precedent meditation, and writing also the chief heads of his sermons.'*

It is indeed a "neglect of the gift of God that is in us," to trifle either in the study or in the pulpit. God will bless our endeavours—not our idleness. Our best thoughts and most careful studies are due to the work of the pulpit. To venture upon it with slender and imperfect furniture, argues but a slight feeling of Ministerial responsibility. Admitting that some gifted Ministers may preach warmly and accurately without study, yet reverence for our Master's name, a proper consideration of the dignity, and solemn business of the pulpit might well to serve to repress a rash and undigested exercise of this most important ministry. How unequal to the exigency is the gathering of a few naked and unconnected truths, without weighing the most forcible modes of application to the consciences and varied circumstances of our people.† The sustaining exercise of faith will indeed be realized in diligent

* Featley's Life of Bishop Jewell. Comp. Mr. Cecil's own account of the manner of commencing his Ministry—in his life, prefixed to 'Remains.' This was the complaint in Jerome's time—'Sola Scripturarum ars est, quam sibi passim omnes vendicant. Hanc garrula anus, hanc delirus senex, hanc sophista verbosus, hanc universi præsumunt, lacerant, docent antequam discunt.'—Epist. et Paulin. Even the heathen epigrammatist remarked—

'Si duri puer ingeni videtur,
Præconem facias.' Mart. 1. 5. Epig. 56.

† 'We must,' as Baxter reminds us, 'study how to convince and get within men, and how to bring each truth to the quick, and not leave all this to our extemporary promptitude, unless in cases

preparation; but in wilful neglect we can expect only the merited recompense of our presumption.

The style, arrangement, and substance of the sermons of the most eminent preachers prove their diligence in the work of pulpit preparation. President Edwards' high reputation as a preacher arose from his great pains in composition, especially in his early Ministry.* Philip Henry, in the latter period of his Ministry, would say, 'that he might now take a greater liberty to talk, as he called it, in the pulpit, that is, to speak familiarly to people. Yet *to the last he abated not in this preparation for the pulpit*'†—like the royal preacher in Jerusalem, who, in the decline of life "*still* taught the people knowlege."‡ It is however most important that the tone of our pulpit studies should be of a spiritual and experimental character. The materials drawn from intellectual sources, or from a lowered standard of orthodox theology, will be cold, uninteresting, and inapplicatory. Eliot's view of the importance of preparation is admirable. 'He liked no preaching but what had been well studied for; and he

of necessity. Experience will teach, that men are not made learned or wise without hard study and unwearied labour and experience.'—Reformed Pastor.

* See his Life, prefixed to his Works, vol. i. 49.

† Life, p. 192. His excellent son's preparation for the pulpit was equally unremitting. 'To that leading object,' observes his Biographer, 'every other was subordinate. All he said, and all he saw, as well as the things he heard, were regarded by him with less or with more attention, as they bore upon *that*. Nothing crude or indigested found its way through his agency into the solemn assembly. 'Take heed,' he would say, 'of growing *remiss* in your work. Take pains while you live. Think not that after a while you may relax and go over your old stock. The scripture still affords new things to those who search them. Continue searching. How can you expect God's blessing on your people's observance, if you are careless?''—Williams's Life of Matthew Henry, pp. 112, 113.

‡ Eccl. xii. 9.

would very much commend a sermon, which he could perceive had required some good thinking and reading in the author of it. I have been present,' says his biographer, 'when he thus addressed a preacher just come home from the assembly with him: 'Brother, there was oil required for the service of the sanctuary, but it must be beaten oil; I praise God that I saw your oil so well beaten to-day. The Lord help us always by good study to beat our oil, that there may be no knots in our sermons left undissolved, and that there may be a clear light thereby given in the house of God.' And yet he likewise looked for something in a sermon beside and beyond the mere study of man. He was for having the Spirit of God breathing in it and with it; and he was for speaking those things, from those impressions and with those affections, which might compel the hearer to say—'The Spirit of God was here.' I have heard him complain, 'It is a sad thing, when a sermon shall have that one thing—the Spirit of God—wanting in it.' '*

There may be, however, great injury in slavishly following any popular pattern. It is useful to observe the diversities of gifts in our brethren; but our chief business is with the discernment and cultivation of our own particular gifts, and the sedulous endeavour to acquire a competent measure of all Ministerial gifts, at least so as not in any part wholly to come short. Many young Ministers have crippled their own energies and usefulness by a vain attempt to exercise those higher qualifications, which they have marked in their more favoured brethren, instead of improving the more humble, but perhaps equally efficient, capabilities which had been distributed to them.

* Mather's Life of Eliot.

Yet does fruitful pulpit preparation depend upon the spirituality as well as the diligence of the habit. It is an improving and industrious habit, flowing from the heart, penetrated with a sense of the love of Christ, the value of souls, the shortness of time, and the supreme concerns of eternity. This spiritual disposition realizes an accurate perception of the main object, directing the studies to it with power of interest; so that, even with the most unwearied course of application, the Minister without this habit becomes a mere trifler in his momentous work.

But the general importance of this subject will justify us in considering it more in detail, under the three particulars of—Composition of Sermons—Habit of Meditation—and Special Prayer.

SECTION I.

COMPOSITION OF SERMONS.

How much responsibility attaches itself to the subject matter and the mode of our pulpit addresses! It cannot be of light moment, whether our people are "fed with knowledge and understanding," or with ill-prepared and unsuitable provision. The pulpit is the ordinary distribution of the bread of life for their daily nourishment, and much wisdom indeed is here required, "rightly to divide the word of truth," that each may be ready to say—"a word spoken in season, how good is it."*

In the selection of the subject matter of our public instructions, the Sacred Volume opens to us a field

* 2 Tim. ii. 15. Prov. xv. 23.

of almost infinite extent. To occupy the whole field is impossible. To seize the definite points, best adapted to the occasion, is the desirable object. The Apostle gives us some wise cautionary rules respecting our choice of texts and subjects, marking with equal distinctness "the things that are good and profitable to men," and "the things that are unprofitable and vain."* He would have us avoid curious or speculative matters, as inconsistent with the design of our office, and unprofitable in their results.† He would have us "affirm constantly" the doctrine of man's ruin and recovery, as the sole efficient spring of practical godliness,‡ and, after his own example,§ bend all subjects naturally to Christ, and concentrate them all in the full exhibition of his cross. Various sources for the direction of this system of instruction occur in the daily course of reading, in secret retirement with God, in the habit of family intercourse, in unlooked for, or even ordinary providential occurrences. Subjects thus rising before us will always find a responsive interest in their adaptation to the present wants and cares of individual cases. Cases more especially in our parochial intercourse—of ignorance, of hardened obstinacy, of perplexity, or of awakened conviction, will furnish some of the best materials for our Sabbath Ministrations. This was Cotton Mather's excellent rule, to 'consider the case and circumstance of his hearers as his means

* Comp. Tit. iii. 8, 9.

† 2 Tim. ii. 15, 16, 23. Bishop Reynolds warns us against a danger closely allied to this—the vain affectation of finding something new and strange in the plainest texts, which shows pride and wantonness much more than solid learning or judgment. Sermon on Self-denial, Works, p. 810.

‡ Tit. iii. 8, ἵνα—in order that—to the end that, &c.

§ See 1 Cor. ii. 2.

of direction to his subjects, and to have some particular design of edification in every sermon that he preached.'

The propriety of selecting texts merely as mottos for pulpit dissertations may be questioned. The occasion of the discursive inquiry is perhaps taken from the text, but the text itself is left nearly untouched in its own place, without any exposition of its component parts, or of its connexion with the preceding and subsequent context. Vitringa justly observes of this method, that though it may afford in some cases opportunities for useful discussion, yet that it is liable to considerable objections, as tending to 'divert the mind from the direct meditation of the sacred text, which is the true food of the soul, and the treasury of Divine wisdom, and to which alone the converting influence of the Spirit of God is annexed.'*

In speaking of *the treatment of texts*, we may refer to some of Cotton Mather's admirable rules, such as the following—If possible—to read the text in the original, and consult commentators before he composed his sermon—to endeavour after a scriptural style in his sermons, and not commonly to dismiss any heads of discourse without some Scripture proof or illustration—to have much of Christ in all his sermons, as knowing that the Holy Ghost loves to glorify Christ; and hoping, that, if he followed this rule, the Holy Spirit would favour him with much of his influence in the exercise of his ministry—to crowd every sermon as full of matter as possible without obscurity.†

One or two remarks upon these rules may be allowed. The use of commentators is well before we compose our sermons, but not before *we have considered and arranged*

* Vitri. Methodus Homiletica, cap. iii. † See his Life.

them. This was Mr. Cecil's plan of preparation; not to forestall his own views by the use of commentaries, but first to talk over the subject to himself, writing down whatever struck his mind; and *after having arranged* what he had written, settled his plan, and exhausted his own resources, to avail himself of all extrinsical help.* The use of helps so as to call forth the native energies, and original resources of the mind, requires much consideration. There is no greater hindrance to solid learning, than to make such use of other men's resources, as to neglect our own. Helps for composition in the form of 'Skeletons' need great discretion, discrimination, and diligence, to employ with personal and Ministerial advantage, so that the proposed *helps* do not rather prove *serious hindrances* to composition. The Writer has been forcibly struck with the successful ingenuity displayed in Mr. Simeon's well-known and most useful work. The care and thought requisite to produce from his volume a complete and well-proportioned discourse, is fully equal to the labour of an original composition; so skilfully are the breaks contrived to exercise the judgment in the suitable filling up of the vacuum, and arrangement of the Scriptural matter in its proper place and proportion.* A mere copyist of the 600 Skeletons would constantly transplant his people into the valley of dry bones, where the bones were both "very many and very dry." But a thoughtful mind would find ample and profitable employment in clothing the Skeletons, and exhibiting them fitted with solid matter, in the form of symmetry and

* See his Life, prefixed to his 'Remains.'

† This remark applies with less force to the Horæ Homileticæ of this revered writer, which, being constructed for the use of the laity as well as the clergy, came from the author's hands with more substance and completeness.

strength. As an illustration of this, Henry Martyn's sermon on Psalm ix. 17. is the filling up of Mr. Simeon's Skeleton on that text. It was worked out (as we accidentally learn from his life) under circumstances of peculiar disadvantage and mental agitation. But the life that is infused throughout, the variety of its enlargements, the accuracy of the proportions of its several parts, the skill with which the breaks are completed, and the warm and strong colouring given to the whole—all combine to give it the power and effect of an original and talented composition.* A remark may also be made upon Cotton Mather's rule of crowding his sermons with matter. It would be well that our discourses should be, like Elihu's, "full of matter;"† and we must regret, that a good man is not always a wise or a full man.‡ Yet we must remember our people's capabilities as well as our own. Their digestive powers for the reception of food are limited, and it would be most injurious to stretch them beyond their healthful exercise. The principle of our Lord's instruction was, to "speak the word unto the people as they were able to hear it." Had he said all that he might have said, it would have been infinitely more than they would have been able to have received, and consequently the grand end of his instruction would have been lost. Such is the fertility of the field of Scripture doctrine, that consummate prudence is often required to select the most appropriate instruction. Mr. Cecil justly remarks, that 'it requires as much

* See his Life, pp. 130—132, and compare his volume of Sermons (v.) with Helps to Composition, Skel. 387.

† Job xxxii. 18.

‡ Archbishop Usher used to call Dr. Manton a voluminous preacher—not from tedious length of his discourses, but from his art of compressing the substance of volumes of Divinity into a narrow compass.

reflection to know what is not to be put into a sermon, as what is.*

So much however has been written upon the treatment of texts, by older and more experienced hands, that the Writer is almost ashamed to suggest any remarks of his own. It seems generally desirable that the introduction to the discourse should embrace some slight reference to the principles about to be discussed—perhaps it more successfully conciliates attention with an intelligent audience, than a preparatory view of the doctrines of the text naturally flowing from a clear exposition of the context. In the body of the discussion, the clearness of the method materially depends upon 'having no more heads than can be sufficiently amplified within the bounds of the discourse, so as to be rendered sensible to the hearers. They should be quite distinct from one another, at the same time that they all concentre on the main point.'† On the general subject, Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon,‡ has furnished the chief matter of enlargement and discussion to those that have followed him. Some of his minuter points of detail, by the judgment of all, admit of improvement. But no work probably is more useful in moulding the habits into a thoughtful digestion of the

* Cecil's Remains—'Verbum sic populo Dei dispensandum, ut multum, non multa. Prurit quandoque concionatoris animus, ut multa doctrinæ capita percurrat; sylvam materiæ in concione accumulet. At nec hoc est ritè concionari, nec sic populus ædificatur. Maxima pars vulgi, quâ est ingenii hebetudine, multitudine rerum, quæ varii generis, potiùs obruitur, quàm instruitur. Non tam itaque referto quot poteramus doctrinæ capita percurrere, quam, quid auditoribus commodum.—'Bowles' Pastor, Lib. ii. c. 10.

† Fordyce's Eloquence of the Pulpit.

‡ Prefixed to Simeon's Helps to Composition, and lately published in a separate volume, enriched with many valuable improvements.

subject matter, and a lucid arrangement of the materials. And this, while it gives the hearer the greatest advantage in the apprehension of truth, enables him to retain it with the most permanent impression; 'method being a chain, in which, if a man should let slip any one part, he may easily recover it again, by that relation and dependence which it hath with the whole.'* There may indeed be a danger even on this side of being too artificial in our mode; and lest our matter should become fettered by the restriction of canons, sometimes too accurate for the free and popular flow of Scripture.† It is however most desirable to avoid the habit of running away from our text, which has gained, for some of us, the name of 'fugitive preachers.' The most forcible matter is enervated by its unnatural connexion. The simplest subjects are obscured by the introduction of irrelevant detail.

Bishop Wilkins states the three component parts of a sermon to be method, matter, and expression. 'Each of these,' he observes, 'do contribute mutual assistance to each other. A good method will direct to proper matter; and fitting matter will enable for good expression.'‡ The method will be shown in laying down the scheme—the matter in fitting it up—and the expression in clothing it with an appropriate garb. Having already glanced at the importance of *method*, we proceed to mark the sources from which *matter* must be collected. The first source must be a close analysis of every important word in the text, and of the design of the

* Bishop Wilkin's Ecclesiastes, p. 6.

† Augustine excellently observes—'Periculum est, ne fugiant ex animo quæ sunt docenda, dum attenditur, ut arte dicantur.' —Lib. iv. De doctr. Christian. c. 3.

‡ Bishop Wilkin's Ecclesiastes, p. 5.

whole illustrated by the examination of the parallel references, by an attentive ruminating inspection of the context, and by an immediate reference to the analogy of faith. This will of course form the ground-work of the sermon, as indeed it is the only definite way of discerning the real meaning of the message of God, and of guarding against the substitution of the word of man in the place of Divine instructions. In the separation of a text from the context, some notice of the historical circumstances connected with it—of the scope of the sacred writer—the successive steps, and consecutive reasoning, by which he arrives at his point, must be obviously important. Claude enumerates in detail the various sources from whence matter may be elicited upon any given subject,* varying according to the different cast of the subject proposed. The *direct sources* are obtained from the immediate matter of the text, the consideration of the speaker, the circumstances of the occasion, the person addressed, the tracing of the principles developed in the text to their consequences, or consequences referred back to their original principles, the connexion and gradual approximation of means to their end, or the drawing out of the matter of discussion into practical and experimental improvement. An interesting variety of *collateral sources* may be drawn from parallelism, contrasts, illustrations, pursuing the subject in direct inference, objections, or hypothetical suppositions, &c. The exercise of a sound judgment in availing ourselves of these helps, is as obvious, as is their effective use in due proportion, and under well-

* They may be seen sensibly drawn out, and pertinently illustrated, in Sturtevant's Conversations and Letters upon Preaching; and in a subsequent work by the same author—'The Preacher's Manual.'

disciplined restraint. But the Scripture is after all the grand store-house of the most valuable materials for our compositions. It was an excellent remark of an old man to Musculus, one of the Swiss reformers—'*Si vis fieri bonus concionator, da operam ut sis bonus Biblicus.*' Dr. Watts reminds his Minister on this subject that he was 'a Minister of the Word of God, a Professor and Preacher of the Bible, and not a mere Philosopher on the foot of Reason, nor an orator in a Heathen school.'* There is no end to the exhaustless and diversified stores in this treasure-house. Whether we want forms of clear instruction, convincing argument, powerful or melting address, or even the higher strokes of eloquence, whether of a tender or awful character, we find here an unfailing supply of 'thoughts that breathe in words that burn.' Not that we would recommend a long string of texts, or sermons chiefly composed of this substance—but a ready application of Scripture, after Cotton Mather's plan, in conformation of the distinct points of our discourses—often in the way of express reference, and more often still in giving the substance and matter of Scripture. This will be found to require something more than a retentive memory to refrain from overcharging the sermons,† and to dispose the proofs and references in their suitable place and connexion. To draw the main strength from an accurate application of

* Humble Attempt, p. 64.

† It was Mr. Robinson's sensible judgment, 'that one or two texts were as good as one hundred.' A valuable old writer observes the defects on both sides—of loading sermons with a mass of Scripture, and leaving them wholly destitute. He remarks, that a judicious selection of Scripture proofs (seldom more than one to a single point) was the practice of Christ and his apostles, though they could have produced multiplied testimonies of Scripture in defending themselves against their enemies. Zepperi Ars Concion. Lib. ii. c. vi.

Scripture, confirms our statements with weight of Divine authority. On this account the Apostle's "speech and preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom," and he was careful to "speak in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth," "that the faith of his people should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God."*

Perhaps the most accurate view of a pulpit composition would embrace the discussion of the doctrine of the text in two or more divisions—so clearly arranged, that the whole matter of the discourse has immediate reference to the several main heads of the subject—each division strengthened and illustrated by scriptural testimonies, connected by a short paraphrase, and applied in their various bearings upon the respective cases of our congregation. If the length of discussion were likely to extend beyond its due bounds, it would be better to sketch a short outline in the introduction, or to seize the most prominent points of the subject, rather than to be constrained to press its personal interest upon minds ill-prepared by weariness to receive a deep and permanent impression. Care however will always be needed, lest our minds be so taken up with the mechanism of the sermon, as to forget that which alone can infuse life and power into it. We may produce a Skeleton clothed with flesh, and exhibiting the most exact proportion of its several parts; yet still may it be, like the dry bones lately referred to, without the quickening breath and influence of heaven.

With regard to the *moulding of our sermons*—Cotton

* 1 Cor. ii. 4, 13. Chrysostom well remarks—'If any thing be spoken without Scripture, the knowledge of the hearers halteth.'—On Psalm lxxxvi. To the same purport Augustine—'Non valet—hæc ego dico, hæc tu dicis, hæc ille dicit; sed hæc dicit Dominus.' Ad Vincent.

Mather's rule wisely suggests the importance of a scriptural style. It has been admirably observed by a living writer—that the Bible 'being intimately associated in his mind with every thing dear and valuable, its diction more powerfully excites devotional feelings than any other; and when temperately and soberly used, imparts an unction to a religious discourse, which nothing else can supply. For devotional impression, we conceive that a very considerable tincture of the language of Scripture, or at least such a colouring, as shall discover an intimate acquaintance with these inimitable models, will generally succeed best.'* Add to which—the peculiar simplicity of the Scripture phraseology makes it the most attractive vehicle for the communication of religious truth. There is no book so intelligible as the book of God—no book, that connects itself so readily with popular feelings and interests—no language, whether of exposition, address, or illustration, that is therefore so generally acceptable and enlivening, as that of the sacred volume. Few readers of Saurin and French Divines of his class, orthodox in their views and forcible in their statement of Scriptural truth—but have felt a lack of unction, warmth, and spiritual excitement

* Review of Foster's Essays, by Rev. R. Hall. Vitringa speaks excellently to the same purport—'Non in sententiis tantam et doctrinis, verum etiam in dictis et phrasibus Scripturæ S. tantam vim et pondus esse, ut nullum verbum qualecumque aliud ei, in exponendis rebus spiritualibus sive *simplicitatis*, sive *proprietatis* et nativæ significationis respectu, comparari queat. Vocabula et dictiones Spiritus S. nudæ, et nullis permixtæ lenociniis orationis aut exegesios humanæ, passim sic afficiunt et illustrant mentem, ut quicquid iis admiscetur, insipidum videatur.' Method. Homil. Dr. Watts, however, speaks of preachers, who 'have such a value for elegancy, and so nice a taste for what they call polite, that they dare not spoil the cadences of a period to quote a text of Scripture in it.' Improvement of the Mind, Part II. chap. vi. sect. iii.

arising from their scanty infusion of the sacred dialect into their writings—a deficiency for which no powers of genius or eloquence can compensate to a spiritual mind.

It is scarcely necessary to animadvert upon the pitiful practice of a copyist in preaching. Mr. Addison (a name of high authority in accomplished literature, but of little theological weight) commends Sir Roger de Coverly's Chaplain for having his list of sermons from the best Divines, ready drawn up in course for the whole year, adding—'I would heartily wish that more of your Country Clergymen would follow this example, and, instead of wasting their spirits in laborious compositions of their own, would endeavour after a handsome elocution, and all those other talents, which are proper to enforce what has been penned by greater masters. This would be not only more easy to themselves, but would edify their people.'* That such a plan would be 'more easy to ourselves' no one would presume to deny. But the results of edification of our people from this system of idleness are much more questionable. Where the talent entrusted to us is thus "hid in a napkin," instead of being put out to daily use, what other stamp do we see upon the Minister, than that of an "unprofitable servant?" † Where "the gift is neglected," instead of "stirred up," ‡ what blessing can the Spirit, thus grieved, and dishonoured, be expected to assure? It is to be feared, that Mr. Addison's conception of the power of a sermon was rather, as the magical effect of eloquence, or of moral suasion, than as the fruit of faith and prayer, connected in the ordinary dispensations of Divine grace with "the

* Spectator, No. 106 † Matt. xxv. 25—30.
‡ 1 Tim. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6.

weak" and not the wise "things of this world." *. George Herbert's rule for this Country Parson, was more accurate—'Though the world is full of such composures' (as Sir Roger's Chaplain borrowed) '*yet every man's own is fittest, readiest, and most savoury to him.*'† What Christian student in the Ministry does not find the employment of composition both an useful exercise for his mind, and a means of grace for his soul? And what he has thus gathered in as the fruit of his own study and acquaintance with his people's wants, and consecrated to the Lord in the simplicity of faith, prayer, and love, will be sealed with the Divine blessing, while human dependence, sloth, and indifference, will be unvisited and unblest.

* See 1 Cor. i. 26—29.

† Country Parson, ch. iv. Bishop Sprat in his Charge to the Diocese of Rochester reprobates this practice in the strongest terms. Bishops Bull and Burnet however recommend it to the younger and uninformed clergy. The former suggests the use of Tillotson's sermons, the Homilies, or a section of the Whole Duty of Man. Clergym. Instructor, pp. 249—251, with 297, 298. Burnet, Past. Care, ch. ix. The Homilies indeed were compiled for the purpose of supplying popular instruction in the too frequent case, at that time, of clerical ignorance, and, as the genuine expression of the sentiments of our Reformers, may be considered (with some allowance for the phraseology of the times) the best substitute for original composition. Bishop Wilson recommends as a part of Academical instruction for Ministerial Students, the abridgment of some of the best practical sermons, marking the manner of handling the subjects, the ways of discussion, arguments, &c. justly observing, however, that 'few discourses are nicely proper for any other place or circumstances, than those for which they were composed.' —Works, iv. pp. 381—383. Perhaps compilation may be allowed in extreme cases, but not as the established rule. For where is the evidence of a Divine call to the sacred office in a *total destitution* of an important Ministerial qualification—"*apt to teach?*" Until a man 'is able to go without crutches, and work without patterns,' (to use Bishop Burnet's illustrations) had he not better remain in the important character of a Christian student, until by prayer and study he should be able to 'purchase to himself a good degree' in the Christian Ministry?

The importance of deliberate preparation for pulpit composition is well deserving consideration. 'If it is driven off late,' Mr. Cecil remarks—'accidents may occur which may prevent due attention to the subject. If the latter days of the week are occupied, and the mind driven into a corner, the sermon will usually be raw and undigested. Take time to reject what ought to be rejected, as well as to supply what ought to be supplied.'* Dr. Hammond always had a subject in hand, and no sooner had he finished one sermon than he commenced another.† Though perhaps it would not be desirable to follow this routine without interruption, yet this habit of constantly turning our studies to present account is of the first importance. The opposite course, of suffering the week to pass away without anxiety respecting the preparation of the Sabbath, belongs far more to indolence or presumption than to any warranted exercise of faith. It may be doubted whether it is not better to bring our old stores into fresh service, rather than to bring out the new with indigested haste. At all events, a few hours at the close of the week, or the impulse of the moment of duty in an ordinary way can furnish a very inadequate performance of this weighty responsibility;‡ while a

* See his Life, prefixed to the 'Remains.'

† See Fell's Life of Hammond, a most interesting and instructive piece of biography.

‡ 'God will curse that man's labours, that is found in the world all the week, and then upon Saturday, in the afternoon, goes to his study: whereas God knows, that time were little enough to pray in and weep in, and get his heart into a fit frame for the duties of the approaching Sabbath.' Preface prefixed to Shephard's Subjection to Christ. Dr. Owen animadverts upon some 'good men so addicted to their study, that they thought the last day of the week sufficient to prepare for their Ministry, though they employ all the rest of the week in other studies.'—Sermon on 1 Cor. xii. 11. Of Mr. Strong, an eminent Puritan Divine, it is told—that, 'he

spiritual habit of conscientious diligence will be attended with encouraging tokens of Divine approbation.

SECTION II.

HABITS OF MEDITATION.

'LECTIO inquirit—oratio postulat—meditatio invenit—contemplatio disgustat'—is Augustine's distinction of the relative departments of pulpit preparation.* Not however needlessly to multiply distinctions—the two last may illustrate the digestive habit of mind, without which, the results of study and composition will be like undigested food lying upon the stomach, clogging and weakening the powers of action. Neither the memory nor any other intellectual compartment can be an useful storehouse for the reception of a confused mass of unshaped materials. There must be order and distribution to dispose the heap for purposes of practical utility. Composition, therefore, without a meditative turn of mind, will present only what has been tersely called 'a mob of ideas.' Or under better auspices, being much more the labour of the head, and the exercise of the intellect, than any excitement of the moving springs of the heart, little benefit can accrue from it. Every intelligent Christian must feel the defalcation of interest in his own mind, when the exercise of this habit has been slackened. It presents

made preaching his work, and was so much taken up in it, that he was often in watchings a great part of the night, besides his pains in his day studies.'—Preface to Strong's Sermons, by Dr. Henry Wilkinson, Dean of Christchurch.

* Augustine quoted in Bishop Wilkins.

all the difference between the influence of truth passing lightly over his mind, or leaving a deep and permanent impression. In the one case the surface is barely swept. In the other case the bottom principles have been touched and called into action. What is merely glanced at in the mind is wholly uninfluential. There is no movement from the heart, till the exhibition of truth is by the habit of meditation clearly exhibited to the mind, set strongly and constantly in view, deeply pondered, and closely applied to the heart. This exercise of the mind will often supply the deficiency of extrinsical help, and increase its natural strength and fertility by constant excitement, while in no other way can it ever know the extent of its own capabilities. Much more also will be retained by this reflective habit, than could ever be acquired by the most dilgent and extensive application of foreign resources. What is thus gathered being made our own, becomes a part of our own course of thought. It is, instinctively turned over and over again, apprehended in its connexion and dependencies with other trains of thought and principles of action, and thus successfully adapted to present circumstances.

We are not however alluding to an intellectual employ, but to a spiritual habit exercised on spiritual objects for spiritual purposes, as an important mean of fixing the impression of Divine truth with clear and abiding influence upon the mind. This habit is inculcated and vouchsafed as the immediate preparation for our public Ministry.* Indeed one of the difficulties of the Ministry is this, that it requires the continual ruminating of spiritual subjects in our minds, in order

* Ezek. iii. 1, 2.

that our minds may be cast into the mould of those truths, which we set forth before our people. The cultivation of this habit has an important bearing upon the general efficiency of our Ministry;* nor can "the man of God," without it, ever become "a good Minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of sound doctrine."† For, as Quesnel, observes, 'how shall any one be able to nourish others with the word, who does not first nourish himself therewith? It one thing for a man to enlighten his understanding, to fill his imagination, and to load his memory; and another, to nourish his heart with it. A man nourishes himself with it, if he lives upon it; and he lives upon it, if he changes it as it were into his own substance, if he practises it himself, if he renders it proper and familiar to himself, so as to make it the food and nourishment with which he ought to feed others.'‡

In beating out the matter of our texts, this habit will be found of incalculable utility. 'In the plainest text of Scripture there is a world of holiness and spirituality; and if we in prayer and dependence upon God did sit down and consider it, we should behold much more than appears to us. It may be, at once reading or looking we see little or nothing, as Elijah's servant; he went out once, he saw nothing; therefore he was commanded to look seven times. What now? says the prophet: I see a cloud rising, like a man's hand; and by and by the whole surface of the heavens was covered

* 1 Tim. iv. 15. † Ib. 6.

‡ Quesnel on 1 Tim. iv. 6. Owen Stockton remarks, as one of his chief encouragements for the Ministry, 'the benefiting of his own soul in his meditations for preaching. Whilst he was studying for others, the Lord made it a word of instruction for himself. And he found it the best means of growth, to be watering of others.' See his Life.

with clouds. So you may look lightly upon a Scripture and see nothing; look again and you will see a little; but look seven times upon it; *meditate often upon it*, and there you shall see a light, like the light of the sun.'*

Nor is the habit less important, in the *immediate* exercise of our public Ministry. It much assists our freedom, self-possession, and personal comfort in the act of delivering our message, to have our subject matter inwrought as it were both in our head and heart, by spiritual meditation. It will also enable us pertinently to avail ourselves of any ready suggestions of the moment, and to engraft them into their proper place, without hurry and confusion.—On every account, therefore the devoted concentration of the powers of our mind to the service of God will prove us to be "vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."† 'Suffer me, therefore'—wrote Brainerd to a Ministerial student—'to intreat you earnestly to give yourself to prayer, to reading, and *meditation on Divine truths*; strive to penetrate to the bottom of them, and never be content with a superficial knowledge. By this means your thoughts will gradually grow weighty and judicious, and you hereby will be possessed of a valuable treasure, out of which you may produce "things new and old" to the glory of God.'‡

* Caryl on Job. † 2 Tim. ii. 21.
‡ Letter ix. appended to his Life.

SECTION III.

SPECIAL PRAYER.

We cannot feel too deeply the importance of this component part of pulpit preparation. Augustine sets it forth with much seriousness—'Let our Christian orator,' says he, "who would be understood and heard with pleasure, pray before he speak. Let him lift up his thirsty soul to God, before he pronounce any thing. For since there are many things which may be said, and many modes of saying the same thing, who knows, except he who knows the hearts of all men, what is most expedient to be said at the present hour? And who can cause us to speak as we ought, unless he, in whose hands we and our words are? And by these means he may learn all that is to be taught, and may acquire a faculty of speaking as becomes a pastor. At the hour of speaking itself a faithful spirit will think his Lord's words adapted to his circumstances—"Think not what or how ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."* If the Holy Spirit speak in those who are delivered up to persecution for Christ, why not also to those who deliver Christ to learners. But if any say, that men need to know no rules, nor follow any studies, if the Holy Ghost make men teachers, it might be said also, men need not to pray, because our Lord saith—"your Father knoweth what ye have need of, before ye ask him;" and at this rate the rules of St. Paul to Timothy

* The application of this text to the subject in hand may be questioned. See chap. v. sect. ii. at the beginning.

and Titus might be superseded. Prayer and study therefore should go hand in hand.'*

The most able compositions, the result of deep meditation, would be materially defective without prayer. They would have a larger infusion of the head than the heart, and therefore would be cold, dead, spiritless. We must receive good in order to impart it. It is important, that the preacher's head should be well furnished. But it is of far higher moment, that his heart should be deeply affected, that by the exercise of fervent prayer he should feed upon the subject for his own nourishment, and bring it out to his people in the spirit of simplicity and love. This alone will infuse a life and interest into it, when its spirituality and unction savour of real communion with God.

A few distinct subjects for supplication will now be suggested, as forming a specific part of the preparation for the work of public instruction.

Direction in the choice of texts and topics should be sought from above. This was Cotton Mather's general rule; making more solemn supplication before he entered upon subjects that would require several sermons, or undertook a large course of Scripture. In consulting our own experience and discretion upon this selection, there is the greatest possible need of a

* Treatise on Christian Doctrine, Book iv. quoted by Milner, vol. ii. 441. The following is the excellent advice of an eminent writer, who has never been suspected of enthusiasm—'Sub horam concionis ecclesiastes det se profundæ deprecationi, et ab eo postulet sapientiam, linguam, et orationis eventum, qui linguas infantium facit disertas. *Incredibile dictu*, quantum lucis, quantum vigoris, quantum roboris et alacritatis hinc accedat ecclesiastæ.' Erasm. Eccles. Pericles is said never to have ascended the rostrum without imploring a blessing from his gods. Are there no Christian orators who may stand condemned by this celebrated Athenian?

prayerful frame, waiting to receive any intimation from the circumstances of Providence, or the secret leadings of the Spirit, to guide the mind to suitable and edifying matter for discussion.

In the next step of *entering upon and pursuing our subject*, much matter for supplication will offer itself to the spiritual mind. Cotton Mather's course of pulpit preparation was, to stop at the end of every paragraph, in prayer and self-examination, and endeavour to fix upon his heart some holy impression of the subject. Thus the seven hours which he usually gave to a sermon proved so many hours of devotion to his soul, and a most effectual means of infusing life, warmth, and spirituality into his compositions.* By this rule we should never preach a sermon to our people, in which we had not previously found a blessing to our own souls.

The *frame of our own minds in the pulpit* is another matter for distinct supplication, that we may "speak as the oracles of God,"—that "a door of utterance may be opened" unto us—that we may have a special message to our people—that our hearts may be tenderly affected by their state—that our preaching may flow from love to their souls, and from hearts powerfully excited by zeal for our Master's glory—that we may be assisted to deliver our sermons in a suitable frame, preserved from the influence of the fear of man, and with a simple, earnest dependance on the divine blessing—and that the Lord may preach our sermons to our own hearts,

* This practice he cordially recommended to his Student and Pastor. Math. Stud. p. 191. 'Orabit Ecclesiastes pro se, ut in suo ipsius animo vivam illam efficacem et penetrantem verbi divini vim experiatur et sentiat; ne videlicit ad ignem, quam aliis exsufflat et accendit, ipse frigeat; sed ignis ardens in suo ipsius corde verbum predicatum fiat.' Zepperi Ars Concion. Lib. iv.

both in the study and in the moment of delivering them.*

The *power of our Ministry upon the hearts and consciences of our people*, as the main end of our labour, is too important to be forgotten. We need to pray for them as well as to preach to them—to bring our ministry before God on their account, and to entreat for them, that their attention may be engaged, and their hearts opened to receive our commission; that all hindrances of prejudice, ignorance, indifference, worldliness, and unbelief, may be removed, that the spirit of humility and simplicity, sanctification and faith, may be vouchsafed unto them; in a word, (to use the beautiful language of our church,) 'that it may please thee to give to all thy people increase of grace, to hear meekly thy word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.'

Nothing will give such power to our sermons, as when they are the sermons of many prayers.† How else indeed can any measure of Divine influence attend them? How can we expect to deliver a word from God, except, like an ancient prophet, we "stand upon our watch,

* Our subject suggests the importance of prayer for assistance in the pulpit. But should not we remind ourselves in our preparatory exercises for public service, that the same assistance is equally needed in the desk? No uninspired service contains so much mind or spirituality as the Liturgy. It is alike the service of our understanding and of our heart; and therefore mental energy as well as spiritual feeling are of the utmost moment. The mere reading of the prayers will have little power of exciting a spirit of prayer throughout the congregation. It is when they *are felt and prayed*, that the cord of sympathy vibrates from the heart of the Minister to the hearts of his congregation—"Arise, O Lord, into thy rest. *Let thy priests* be clothed with righteousness, *and let thy saints shout for joy*" Psalm cxxxii. 8, 9.

† 'Your work'—said Mr. Shepard of New England, on his death-bed, to some young Ministers—'is great, and requires great seriousness. *For my own part, I never preached a sermon, which in the composing of it did not cost me prayers with strong cries and tears.*'

and watch to see what he will say to us?"* It is easy indeed to bring to our people the product of our own study, but the blessing is exclusively restricted to what we deliver to them from the mouth of God. Thus we renew our commission from time to time with a fresh sufficiency of grace for our work, and with a strengthened assurance of Divine success. Thus also we obtain that παῤῥησια, which flows into the heart from the unction of grace, and unties our stammering tongues to "speak boldly as we ought to speak."† The assistance also that is received in preaching from this source is of the highest importance. Mr. Scott gives the result of his own experience on this point—'The degree in which, after *the most careful preparation for the pulpit*, new thoughts, new arguments, animated addresses, often flow into my mind, while speaking to a congregation, even on very common subjects, makes me feel as if I was quite another man, than when poring over them in my study. There will be inaccuracies, but generally the most striking things in my sermons are unpremeditated.'‡ This testimony is familiar with the experience of many of our brethren, who in the spirit of prayer are often conscious of luminous and affecting views of truth almost instantaneously presenting themselves to their minds. Nor does it countenance a relaxed system of preparation, while it encourages that acting of faith for present assistance, which gives additional liveliness to our ministry, and brings down from heaven the warmest matter of our sermons at the time of their delivery. Upon all accounts, therefore, it is a fully

* Hab. ii. 1.

† Eph. vi. 19, 20. This was granted to the first apostles in an extraordinary measure, in answer to waiting and prayer. Acts i. 14. with ii. 1—13.

‡ Life, pp. 393, 394.

warranted statement, that sermons which we have obtained chiefly by meditation and prayer, have been preached with more power and edification than others, that have been the results of more elaborate study. On this account some ministers of inferior qualifications are more honoured than some of their talented brethren.* The ablest and most orthodox discourses are paralyzed by the neglect of prayer in their compositions. As a general rule, there can be doubt no but those are the best preachers who are most men of prayer. The most eminent servants of God have given the pre-eminence to this part of pulpit preparation. It is stated of Mr. Bruce, one of "the excellent of the earth," in the troublous times of Scotland, that though he was known to take much pains in searching the mind of God in Scripture, and though he durst not neglect the diligent preparation of suitable matter for the edification of his people, yet that his main business was in the elevation of his own heart into a holy and reverential frame, and to pour it out before God 'in wrestling with him, not so much for assistance to the messenger as the message. The effect was fully answerable to his labour, in the abundant evidence, that he was not alone in his work; but that in his earnest endeavour to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, he laboured thereunto, striving according to his working, which worked in him mightily."† Mr. Spencer, of Liverpool, (a young

* 'Vera ecclesiæ ædificatione administrandis nulla eruditio, eloquentia, et diligentia (quæ interim tamen divinissimæ hujus provinciæ omnibus modis necessaria sunt adminicula et instrumenta) sufficit: sed nauclero hic et præside opus est Spiritu Sancto, qui intellectum illumninet, cor et linguæ plectrum gubernet atque ignitum reddat, et animum viresque addat.' Zepperi Ars Concion. Pref. 4, also Lib. ii. c. i. 16—18.

† Col. i. 28, 29. See an interesting account of Mr. Bruce, given in Fleming's Fulfilment of Scripture.

Minister of extraordinary promise, prematurely, as we are led to think, though doubtless in mercy to himself, snatched away from the church,) is stated invariably to have passed from secret communion with God to what he described as 'that awful place,'—a pulpit.* The uncommon interest and effect which appeared to rest upon his Ministrations, was doubtless drawn more directly from his heavenly habit of mind, than from those unrivalled powers of pulpit eloquence that commanded universal admiration. We may again revert to the practice of one, who has well deserved the name of 'the saintly Fletcher.'† Mr. Gilpin informs us, that 'his preaching was perpetually preceded, accompanied, and succeeded by prayer. Before he entered upon the performance of this duty, he requested of the Great "Master of assemblies" a subject adapted to the conditions of his people, earnestly soliciting for himself wisdom, utterance, and power; for them a serious frame, an unprejudiced mind, and a retentive heart. This necessary preparation for the profitable performance of his ministerial duties was of longer or shorter duration, according to his peculiar state at the time; and frequently he could form an accurate judgment of the effect that would be produced in public by the langour or enlargement he had experienced in private. The spirit of prayer accompanied him from the closet to the pulpit, and while he was outwardly employed in pressing the truth upon his hearers, he was inwardly engaged in pleading that last great promise of his unchangeable Lord—"I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."'‡

* Preface to a volume of posthumous sermons published by the Religious Tract Society. † Southey's Life of Wesley.
‡ Gilpin's Notes on Fletcher's Portrait of St. Paul, p. 52.

Massillon justly observes, that 'the want of prayer is the principal cause of the little good, which the generalities of Pastors do in their parishes, notwithstanding they may exactly fulfil all the other duties of the Ministry. They think they have performed their part well, when they have performed what is commanded; but by the small advantage accruing from it, they might perceive that there is *a something wanting*. The Minister who does not habituate himself to devout prayer, will speak only to the ears of his people; because the Spirit of God, who alone knows how to speak to the heart, and who, through the neglect of prayer, not having taken up his abode within him, will not speak by his mouth.'* Philip Henry thus wrote, upon a studying day—'I forgot explicitly and expressly, when I began, to crave help from God, and *the chariot wheels drove accordingly*. Lord, forgive my omissions, and keep me in the way of duty.'† Indeed, as an old divine observes‡—'If God drop not down his assistance, we write with a pen that hath no ink. If any in the world need walk dependently upon God more than others, the Minister is he.'

Nor must we forget the work of subsequent as well as preparatory prayer. This is in strict conformity to our Master's pattern, who, when he had taught the souls, as well as fed the bodies of the multitude, and sent them away, "departed into a mountain to pray."§ Our work is not over when our people are dismissed from the house of God. During our continuance in

* Charges, pp. 207—209. † Life, pp. 60, 61.

‡ Gurnal. 'There must be the labour of study before Ministers preach' (as he elsewhere observes) 'the labour of zeal and love in preaching—the labour of suffering after preaching—and *always the labour of prayer to crown the whole with success.*'

§ Mark vi. 34—46.

the pulpit, there was one as active as ourselves, and much more powerful, in incessant employ to intercept the passage of every word from our lips to its destined object. Nor will he be the less diligent in seeking to undo what had been done in spite of his efforts, and what will easily be undone by his persevering subtlety, except as we are enabled to counterwork with continued watchfulness and prayer. Dr. Owen reminds us—'To preach the word, and not to follow it with prayer constantly and frequently, is to believe its use, neglect its end, and cast away all the seed of the gospel at random.'

We want to be as deeply concerned after the conclusion of our public work as at our first entrance upon it. For is it not probable, that convictions have been awakened or strengthened by the stroke of the hammer that had been just uplifted? May not some cases of transient impression be charged upon our own consciences, that we had not laboured in secret to drive in the nail further, when it had once entered? Has not probably some soul received its first impress of Divine grace? These cases need our prayer equally with our counsel, nor would the one, disjointed from the other, be permanently helpful. On all accounts, therefore, 'a systematic delivery of the doctrines of the Gospel is essentially requisite to the formation and gradual developement of Christian principles; but it must be accompanied by many an earnest prayer for the effusion of some portion of that Divine grace, which, in primitive times, added to the church in one day three thousand souls.'* This exercise of prayer, though we have spoken of it as *subsequent* to the delivery of the word,

* Bishop of Winchester's Ministerial Character of Christ, p. 170. Compare pp. 91—93.

yet is truly a part of *pulpit preparation.* For it is obvious that by this exercise the mind is kept in the tone of the spirit of prayer, and ready for action upon the next preparatory occasion—Besides that the connexion of the prospect with the retrospect is so natural, that no supplication for a blessing upon the past would be unaccompanied with earnest desires, and warranted expectations of a continued and necessary supply. 'Be much in prayer to God,' was the direction of an excellent Minister; 'thereby you shall find more succour and success in your Ministry, than by all your study.'*

We may conclude the subject of Pulpit Preparation with a few remarks upon the combined effect of the several detailed parts, and upon the precise measure of assistance, which we are warranted to expect in this work.

The sum of the details may be found in the practice of Mr. Mitchell, an American divine,—'in the writing of his discourses for the pulpit, he did, as they say Aristotle did when he wrote one of his famous books—'*dip his pen into his very soul.*' When he was going to compose a sermon, he *began with prayer;* thinking—*Bene orasse est bene studuisse.*' He then read over the text in the original, and weighed the language of the Holy Ghost. If any difficulty occurred in the interpretation, he was wary how he ran against the stream of the most solid interpreters, whom he still consulted. He was then desirous to draw forth his *doctrines,* and perhaps *other heads* of his discourse, at the beginning of the week, that so his occasional

* Mather's New England, iii. 138.

thoughts might be useful thereunto. And he would ordinarily improve his *own meditations* to shape his discourse, before he would consult any other authors who treated on the subjects, that *so their notions might serve only to adorn and correct his own.* Lastly, having finished his composure, he concluded with a thanksgiving to the Lord his Helper.'*

Habits of meditative and prayerful composition, while they enable us to avail ourselves of external help, are most beneficial in maintaining the sense of experimental religion in our own souls. And great indeed is the importance of this temperament in Christian Ministers, 'that they should attend to the direction of conscience, that they should mark the workings and convictions of the Holy Spirit, and exercises of mind, and effects resulting from them—that they should give their attention to the different changes in Christian experience, utterly unknown to men in their natural state—that they should maintain constant communion with God by meditation and prayer, in order to obtain an intimate knowledge of "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," and be apt to administer to the consciences of others, that they may escape the same censure with which the Lord rebuked Nicodemus—"Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?"'† The consciences of serious Christians discover the value of a sober and judicious Ministry, thus framed upon an accurate acquaintance with experimental religion. They feel themselves more soundly comforted by one discourse, woven and wrought out of a feeling heart, spiritually schooled in the exercises of the ways of God and the methods of Satan, supported and

* Mather's New England, iv. 205.
† Vitr. Method. Homilet. cap. x.

sinewed by the genuine expositions of the word of God, and enforced 'with the evidence and demonstrations of the Spirit,'—than from cold statements of orthodoxy, or abstract views of the Christian system. A high relish of Divine truth in the Minister naturally gives a great insight into human character, and enables him skilfully to exhibit the terms of his commission for the conviction of the judgment, and the touching of the heart and conscience. Nor could he obtain from any other source that taste and spiritual discernment, to fill his sermons with those striking and affecting sentiments, which find a responsive voice in the consciences of the ungodly, and in the sympathies of humble and experienced Christians.

The axiom of practical religion applies in full force to the expectation of assistance in our public work. Labour in the preparation for the pulpit, as if our whole success depended on it. Pray and depend upon Christ, as feeling that "without him we can do nothing." In neglecting preparation, we should tempt God to depart from his ordinary course for our assistance; in trusting to our preparation we should make a God of our gifts. It is more curious than important to inquire into the modus of the assistance of the Divine Spirit in the composition or delivery of our sermons, or to endeavour to determine the precise boundaries between the result of our own thought, and the efflux from a higher source. But it will be safe to ascribe all the honour of the success to the Divine agent, and to attribute to ourselves all the infirmities attendant upon the work. We are warranted to expect Divine assistance to the utmost extent of our necessity, and to lay our whole stress upon it, so as to be persuaded that there can be no *effectual* meditation, composition,

or delivery without it. But such a dependance as supersedes the necessity of preparation is unscriptural and delusive. Not that we must expect the assistance from above in the way of mechanical sufficiency, to be relied upon from any innate powers. After we have preached with power and acceptance for successive years, there is still no more security than at first, and no prospect of the continuance of the supply except in the renewed habit of the exercise of faith.

The sum, however, of all that could be offered upon this subject, cannot be given better than in Mr. Cecil's words—'I have been cured,' he remarks, 'of expecting the Holy Spirit's influence without due preparation on our part, by observing how men preach, who take up that error. We must combine Luther with St. Paul—'Bene orasse est bene studuisse,' must be united with St. Paul's—"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all." One errs who says—'I will preach a reputable sermon;' and another errs who says—'I will leave all to the assistance of the Holy Spirit,' while he has neglected a diligent preparation.'*

* Cecil's Remains. How many of us may subscribe to the feeling confession of an excellent living Minister—'In the preparation of our sermons, alas! how cold, how formal have we often been! Prayer has been the last thing we have thought of, instead of the first. We have made dissertations, not sermons; we have consulted commentators, not our Bibles; we have been led by science, and not by the heart: and therefore our discoveries have been so tame, so lifeless, so uninteresting to the mass of our hearers, so little savouring of Christ, so little like the inspired example of St. Paul.' Rev. D. Wilson's Essay to Baxter's Reformed Pastor, p. xiii.

CHAPTER III.

THE SCRIPTURAL MODE OF PREACHING THE LAW.

THE mark of a Minister "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed," is, that he "rightly divides the word of truth." A full and consistent application of the Gospel to the mass of our unconverted hearers, combined with a system of spiritual instruction for the several classes of Christians, constitutes the dispensations of the Christian Ministry. It will be distinguished by a Scriptural symmetry in the arrangement of Christian principles, embracing the whole revelation of God, in its doctrinal instructions, experimental privileges, and practical results. This revelation of God is divided into two parts, distinct from each other, though so intimately connected, that a knowledge of neither can be accurately known without the other. The Scriptural preaching of the Law is therefore a main part of our subject, which we shall consider separately, and in its connexion with the Gospel.*

SECTION I.

THE PREACHING OF THE LAW—ITS CHARACTER—USES—AND OBLIGATIONS.

THERE can be no question that the preaching of the law in its Scriptural character and connexion must form

* The reader may be referred to Mr. Simeon's Sermons on Gal. iii. 19, in his Appendix to Horæ Homileticæ, for a most luminous exhibition of the Scriptural preaching of the law. Comp. Daven. on Col. i. 28. on the duty and importance of preaching the law.

a constituent part of the Ministry of the Gospel. Some indeed upon a contracted and inaccurate view identify the preaching of the law with legal preaching. Others preach the law independently of the Gospel. Others again narrow its exceeding breadth, by bringing character and conduct to the criterion of some lower rules and inferior standard, such as expediency, the opinion of the world, prudence, and consequences. But as there is a legal mode of preaching the Gospel, so there is an evangelical mode of preaching the Law. Luther's indignation was roused by the perversion both of the Law and the Gospel in his times. Propositions were brought to him, against the preaching of the law, because it could not justify. 'Such seducers'—said he—'do come already among our people, while we yet live—what will be done when we are gone?' 'Never,' observes he, 'was a more bold and harsh sermon preached in the world, than that which St. Paul preached, wherein he quite abolisheth and taketh away Moses, together with his laws, as insufficient for a sinner's salvation. But when we are not in hand with justification, we ought greatly and highly to esteem the law. We must extol and applaud it in the highest degree, and (with St. Paul) we must count it good, true, spiritual and Divine, as in truth it is.'*

The Apostle combines his view of the character and obligations of the law with his most expanded views of evangelical truth. He defines its character to be "holy, just, and good."† He informs us that its lawful use is "good"‡ for us. The exposition of this character, and the enforcement of this use, must there-

* Luther's Table Talk, ch. xii.
† Rom. vii. 12. ‡ 1 Tim. i. 8.

fore be involved in the terms of the Ministerial commission.

The *character of the law of God*, as the transcript of the divine mind and image, 'is "*holy*," as presenting to man the love of God, and at the same time exhibiting that most glorious proof of God's love to man, which is the essence of his holiness—"*just*," as being comformable to, and deduced from, the first and most simple principles of justice between God and his creatures—"*good*," such a law as conscience tells us, is suitable to the character of God, is most useful for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose, of uniting man to God by a happy discipline of obedience—and the constant obedience to which, will bring him to that consummation of bliss, which is ordained in the end and recompense of his work.'* Thus in its Author—in its matter—and in its end, it well deserves our highest regard.

The uses of the law are various and important. *The world* are indebted to it for many wholesome and practical results. It discovers to them the holy nature and character of God—it informs them of their duty, and binds them to the performance of it. Its restraint bridles the lust of man within the bounds of external decency, without which, the world would become "a field of blood." It condemns also those who cast off its yoke. Even the heathen are brought in guilty by "the work of the law written in their hearts."† It is also a very general *medium of conviction of sin*. Some indeed, who dispense with the law from their Ministry, substitute the law of love, as it is called, as the *only means* of conviction. But did not our Lord employ the moral law with the young Ruler, for this express

* Vitr. Obs. Sacr. Lib. vi. cap. xvii. 11. † Rom. ii. 14, 15.

purpose?* Was it not also the appointed means of bringing the great Apostle to the spiritual apprehension of his sin?† "*By the law is the knowledge of sin.*" Thus again he informs us, that the law entered, *that the offence might abound*‡—not in the transgression of *the heart* (as the direct fruit of the law) but in *the conviction of the conscience*, awakened by a strong display of the spirituality of the law, and of the Divine denunciations of its righteous curse. Its cognizance of every thought, imagination, desire, word, and work, and its uncompromising demand of absolute and uninterrupted obedience upon pain of its everlasting penalty—convince the heart of its guilt, defilement, and wretchedness, and leave the sinner without excuse and without help—under the frown of an holy and angry God—prepared to welcome a Saviour, and lost for ever without him. It is this that forces from him the prayer—"God be merciful to me a sinnner"—as the genuine expression of his heart; even though his external deportment had been, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."§ He now sees in himself the very character of sinfulness and misery to which the Gospel addresses *itself*, and, stretching out the hand of desire and faith, he receives the free gift of the Gospel of Christ. The Christian feels the advantage of the law too well, to be willing, with the Antinomian, to cast it off, because it has lost its justifying power. For what an enlarged view does he gain even from its *covenant form* of the necessity, character, and excellency of the Gospel. The intervention of a Surety, a Redeemer, and an

* Matt. xix. 16—21.
† Rom. vii. 7—9.
‡ Rom. iii. 19, 20. v. 20.
§ Phil. iii. 6.

atonement, was the effect of Divine determination to "magnify the law, and make it honourable,"* that God might honourably pardon, justify, and save, those who had transgressed its sanctions. Without therefore a view of the excellency of the law, both in its precept and its penalty, no sufficient reason appears for the sufferings and death of Immanuel. Thus "the glory of the Ministration of condemnation" commends the exceeding glory of "the Ministration of life and righteousness."†—The same glass exhibits to us *indirectly* what the Gospel shows us in *direct terms*—our infinite obligation to the love of Christ for what he has become, done, and suffered in our place. The greatness of his astonishing condescension is our constraining bond to his service, whose obedience has answered all the demands and suffered all the penalties standing against us, and "brought in everlasting righteousness" as our ground of acceptance before God.

As a rule of life also, the Law is of the utmost importance to the Christian. It comes to him with the authority of God as his Creator, his Sovereign, and his Judge. It is doubly enforced as the law of his Redeemer, as the acknowledgment of his readiness to "take his yoke upon him." For though he is "not without law to God," yet he is specially "under the law to Christ."‡ The end of this law is not to work out his title to eternal life; but as his exercise in the Christian path of obedience, which even in his present imperfect measure of attainment is his highest earthly privilege, as the perfection of it will be the consummation of his heavenly enjoyment.

The uses of the law as a rule of life are among the

* Isaiah xlii, 21. † 2 Cor. iii. 7—9. ‡ 1 Cor. ix. 21.

most efficient means of promoting Christian stedfastness and consistency. Being "written in the heart," it affords to the Christian a *continual touchstone of sincerity*. For what better proof is there of uprightness, than "the testimony of his conscience,"* that he "consents to the law that it is good," that he "delights in it after the inward man," that he esteems all God's commandments "concerning all things to be right," that he counts his want of perfect conformity to it the sin of every moment, that he is satisfied with no attainment short of being "holy, as he that hath called him is holy," and "perfect, as his Father which is in heaven is perfect."†

The rule of the law also furnishes a *continual* and most humbling *standard of self-examination*. The most watchful Christian laments his natural, and often unconscious, spring of self-exaltation; to which, however, the law, as the standard of perfection, operates as a constant and timely check. It lays him low in the dust, it confounds him for the sins of his services as well as for his open transgressions, that he may count all but dung and dross in comparison of Christ, that he may be simple in his dependence on his cross, and quickened to renewed applications for pardon, acceptance, and supplies of grace. The obligation of this law upon the Christian is immutable as the throne of God. What can alter the relation of a creature to his Creator? The additional bond of redemption strengthens—not annihilates, the original obligation.‡ Do we cease to be creatures by becoming new creatures? And are we not therefore bound to personal obedience

* See 2 Cor. i. 12.
† See Rom. vii. 16, 22. Psalm cxix. 128. 1 Pet. i. 15. Matt. v. 48.
‡ Comp. Calvin on Matt. v. 17. Luke x. 26.

by the Sovereign authority of God? or does the obligation of the law lose its force by being conveyed to us through the hands of Christ—himself Lord of all—and standing to us in the most endearing and authoritative relation? Why, we may ask, do men wish to be rid of this rule? But for some latent enmity to the holiness of the Divine character, the thought of escaping from the blessed influence of the law would be intolerable. So far from "gendering unto bondage," it is "the perfect freedom" of evangelical service—so that it is hard to say, whether we are more indebted for deliverance from the law as a covenant, or for subjection to the law as a rule. The proof of our love to the Saviour is the "keeping of his commandments,"* which are none others than the precepts of the moral law, bound upon the Christian's heart with chains of the most powerful and attractive obligation. The first desire of the awakened sinner is—"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" † His constant prayer is—"that his love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment," that he may "not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."‡ It cannot, therefore, be legal bondage, or indeed otherwise than Evangelical privilege, thus to receive the law from the Saviour's hands, stripped of its condemning power, and regulating our affections, temper, and conversation to his glory. Some of our brethren seem afraid of enforcing the obligations of the law, lest they should be thought to be teachers of Moses rather than of Christ. But our Lord had no hesitation in establishing theobligati ons of the old dispensation,§ or in leading his disciples to confess them as their bounden

* John xiv. 15.
† Acts ix. 6.
‡ Phil. i. 9, Eph. v. 17.
§ See Matt. v. 17.

duty.* Following, therefore, his example, we can much more easily bear the imputation of legality for enforcing the sanction of the law, than the reproaches of our conscience for passing them by.

The leaven of Antinomianism is indeed most congenial with the corruption of the heart; and its deadly influence is but too apparent in the inconsistent lives of those who systematically adopt it. To suppose that the law of love renders unnecessary the rule of the decalogue, is to put the main-spring of the watch in the place of the regulator, and to exchange a stable directory of conduct for a principle subject to incessant variations, and readily counterfeited by the delusions of a self-deceiving heart. The disciples of this school rarely, if ever, attain to Christian stedfastness, while in the too frequent defect of Christian sincerity, immortal souls perish as the melancholy victims of delusion.

Glancing for a moment at the relative connexions of the law, we remark—As *a covenant*, it operates in the Divine economy of God, as "the spirit of bondage unto fear," humbling, alarming, convincing. As *a rule of life*, under the conduct of the same Divine influence, it becomes "the spirit of adoption," witnessing to the sincere Christian his interest in the family of God in the testimony of his habitual desire and delight in conformity to its dictates. As *a covenant*, the law brings men to Christ for deliverance from its tyranny. Christ returns them to *the law as their rule*, that while they are delivered from its dominion, ("that being dead wherein they were held,") they might "serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."† And thus they show their gratitude to him for his *perfect*

* Luke xvii, 10. † Rom. vii. 6.

obedience to it *as a covenant* in their stead, by their uniform *obedience to it as a rule* in his service.

A defect, therefore, in the Evangelical preaching of the law is as clear a cause of inefficient Ministration as a legal preaching of the Gospel. In such a Ministry there must be a want of spiritual conviction of sin *generally*—of spiritual sins *most particularly*—and flowing directly from hence, a low standard of spiritual obedience. Indeed all the prevalent errors in the Christian Church may be traced to this source. We should never have heard of Methodist perfection—Mystic dependence upon the inward light—Antinomian delusion—inconsistent profession of orthodoxy—Pharisaical self-righteousness—or Pelagian and Socinian rectitude of nature—if the spiritual standard of the law had been clearly displayed, and its convincing power truly felt. And where conviction is either wanting or superficial, the clearest perception of Evangelical views must fail in experimental and practical effect.

But there are Antinomian errors on the opposite side. If Antinomianism be the relaxation of obedience from the perfect standard of the law of God, what is the *mere moral preaching* that obtains so widely among us, but a refined species of this cursed leaven? The standard to which it recurs is not the law of God, which, as with the professed Antinomian, is wholly cast off, while some indefinite and ever varying standard of inclination or caprice is substituted in its place. With the professed Antinomian also, the notions of mercy and salvation are here used as the palliation of sin. All hope, and no fear, is the character of this preaching. How frightful to think of the deluded souls sliding into eternity in this golden dream! and of what vast importance is it for the resistance of error, and for a fruitful exhibition

of Divine truth—that the Christian Ministry should be distinguished by a full display of the spiritual character, and unalterable obligations of the law of God!

SECTION II.

THE CONNEXION OF THE LAW WITH THE GOSPEL.

MR. NEWTON admirably remarks upon the importance of this subject—'Clearly to understand the distinction, connexion, and harmony between the law and the Gospel, and their mutual subserviency to illustrate and establish each other, is a singular privilege, and a happy means of preserving the soul from being entangled by errors on the right hand or the left!'* Some in the Apostle's time "desired to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed."† This seems to imply the importance in a Christian teacher of a clear understanding of the law in all its connexions. And indeed the momentous matter of a sinner's acceptance with God cannot be accurately stated without a distinct view of this subject. The Judaizing teachers of the Galatian Church, from misconception of this point, had—"darkened the counsel" of the Gospel "by words without knowledge," "bewitched" their "foolish" hearers from the simplicity of Evangelical obedience, and, instead of establishing them "in the liberty, wherewith Christ had made them free," had well nigh "entangled them again with the yoke of bondage."‡

* Newton's Works, i. 322. † 1 Tim. i. 7.

‡ Some valuable remarks, together with the sentiments of Melancthon, on this subject, will be found in Scott's Continuation of Milner, Vol. II. part i. pp. 230—237.

I. This subject embraces an explicit statement of the *difference between the law and the Gospel.* It was an axiom in the old schools of divinity—'Qui scit bene distinguere inter Legem et Evangelium, Deo gratias agat, et sciat se esse Theologum.' There is much difference in the *original revelation.* The law, *partially at least,* (as in the case of the heathens,) is discoverable by the light of nature ;* whereas the Gospel is "the hidden mystery of God," which could never have been known otherwise than by Divine Revelation. We find, therefore, man in his natural state partially acquainted with the law, but wholly unacquainted with the Gospel. Their is also a difference in their *respective regards to man.* The law contemplates man as the creature of God, endued with capabilities for perfect obedience—such as he was at the period of its first promulgation—"standing perfect and complete in all the will of God." The Gospel, however, contemplates man as he is—a sinner, without strength, equally unable to obey, or to offer compensation for disobedience ; guilty, condemned, lost. They differ also *in the power of their sanction.* They both inform us what we ought to be and do. But the Gospel alone provides the necessary resources in union with the Son of God, and participation of a heavenly life derived from him. Command is the characteristic of the law, as encourment is of the Gospel. In the one case obedience is required on the penalty of death ; in the other case it is encouraged by the promise of life. A promise is indeed attached *to the obedience* of the law,† but placed by these terms beyond our reach—whereas in the Gospel it is given *in order to obedience,* and freely vouchsafed.

* See Rom. ii. 14, 15. † Gal. iii. 12.

In its condemning power also, the law is widely different from the Gospel. As a valuable writer tersely observes—'the law condemns, and cannot justify, a sinner; the Gospel justifies, and cannot condemn, the sinner that believes in Jesus. In the law God appears in terrible threatenings of eternal death; in the Gospel he manifests himself in gracious promises of life eternal. In the former he curses, as on Mount Ebal; in the latter he blesses, as on Mount Gerizim. In the one, he speaks in thunder, and with terrible majesty; in the other, with soft whispers, or "a still small voice." By the trumpet of the law he proclaims war with sinners; by the jubilee trumpet of the gospel he publishes peace, "peace on earth, and good will toward men." The law is a sound of terror to convinced sinners; the Gospel is a joyful sound, "good tidings of great joy." The former represents God as a God of wrath and vengeance; the latter, as a God of love, grace, and mercy. The one presents him to sinners as "a consuming fire;" the other exhibits the precious blood of the Lamb, which quenches the fire of his righteous indignation. That presents to the view of the sinner a throne of judgment; this, a "throne of grace." Every sentence of condemnation in Scripture belongs to the law; every sentence of justification forms a part of the Gospel. The law condemns a sinner for his first offence; but the Gospel offers him the forgiveness of all his offences.'* Thus in every point of difference,

* Colquhoun on Law and Gospel, pp. 166, 167. Thus also Patrick Hamilton, the Scotch reformer, writes—'The law sheweth us our sin—the gospel showeth us a remedy for it. The law showeth us our condemnation—the gospel showeth us our redemption. The law is the word of ire—the gospel is the word of grace. The law is the word of despair—the gospel is the word of comfort. The law is the word of disquietude—the gospel is the word of peace.' Patrick's Places—with a short preface by the martyr John Frith.

"that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth."

II. The *harmony of the law with the Gospel* is also a most important subject of our Ministration. Though distinct, they are not opposite. As coming from the same source, they must ultimately meet in the same plan and subserve the same end. Like the seemingly opposite perfections of their glorious Author, they harmonize in mutual subserviency in the Christian system. The provisions of the Gospel are fully commensurate with the demands of the law. Its righteousness fulfils the law as a covenant; its grace obeys it as a rule. Both have a commanding and condemning power. Both combine to lead the sinner to Christ—'the law, as a schoolmaster,' showing his need of him; the Gospel exhibiting him in all points suitable to his need. In this centre of everlasting love, the mercy of the Gospel and the truth of the law meet together. The "righteousness" of the law and the "peace" of the Gospel here "embrace each other."* Both unite to endear the ways of God to the Christian—the law, as the instrument of conviction, teaching us to prize the grace of the Gospel; the Gospel, as the principle of holiness, exciting us ' to delight in the law of God after the inward man."

The *directive* power of the law is in equal consonance with the spirit and end of the Gospel. The grace of the Gospel regulates the Christian's heart and life, by the rule of the law. "Love," which is "the fulfilling of the law," is also the great end of the Gospel. The Gospel nowhere dwells, but "where the law of God is written in the heart." Thus as they are both

* Psalm lxxxv. 10.

parts of the same revelation, they unite in the same heart; and, though the offices of each are materially distinct, neither will be found separate from the other. As both are transcripts of the Divine mind and image, enmity or love to both are inseparable. In the former case, it is the radical principle of the carnal mind; in the latter case, it is the mind of Christ, and the commencement of the service of heaven.

III. *The law as the preparation for the Gospel*, is also a part of our public Ministry. The discipline of the law, in the usual course of the work of Divine grace, is the preparatory step to the clear apprehension and legitimate enjoyment of the Gospel. The order therefore of the dispensation of the Christian Ministry is *first to wound by the law—then to heal by the Gospel.* The Apostle speaks of us, "before faith came, as being under the law, "*shut up unto the faith, which should afterwards be revealed*"—and thus "the law is our schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith;"* which Luther explains to mean —'that the *law must be laid upon those* that *are to be* justified, that they may be shut up in the prison thereof, until the righteousness of faith come—that, when they are *cast down and humbled by the law*, they should fly to Christ. The Lord humbles them, not to their destruction, but to their salvation. *For God woundeth*, that he may heal again. He killeth, that he may quicken again.'

This appears to have been the uniform opinion of the church. Augustine remarks—'The conscience is not to be healed, if it be not wounded. *Thou preachest and pressest the law*, comminations, the judgment to

* Gal. iii. 23, 24, and Luther, in loco.

come, with much earnestness and importunity. He which hears, if he be not terrified, if *he be not troubled, is not to be comforted.*'* Our Reformers were evidently of this judgment. Tindal writes thus—'It becometh the preacher of Christ's glad tidings, first *through the opening of the law*, to prove all things sin, that proceed not of the Spirit, and of faith in Christ, and thereby to bring him unto the knowledge of himself, and of his misery and wretchedness, that *he might derive help.*'† Luther has been already referred to. Calvin observes —'that the *law is nothing else but a preparation unto the Gospel.*' And elsewhere—'The faithful cannot profit in the Gospel, until they shall be first humbled, which cannot be until they come to the knowledge of their sins. It is the *proper function of the law* to call the consciences into God's judgment, and to *wound them with fear.*'‡ Beza remarks briefly, but to the point—'Men are ever to be *prepared for the Gospel, by the preaching of the law.*'§ Archbishop Usher, in reply to the question before us—'What order is there (in the Ministry) used in the delivery of the word, for the begetting of faith?' answers—'First, the *covenant of the law is urged*, to make sin and the punishment thereof known; whereupon the sting of conscience pricketh the heart with a sense of God's wrath, and maketh a man utterly to despair of any ability in himself to obtain everlasting life. *After this preparation the promises of God are propounded*, whereupon the sinner, conceiving a hope of pardon, sueth to God for mercy.'‖ The ablest of the Puritan Divines

* Comment. in Psalm lix.

† Prologue to the Epistle to the Romans, in 'Fathers of the English Church.' Vol. i. 54.

‡ Calvin on John x. 8. xvi. 10. § Beza on 2 Cor. iii. 11.

‖ Usher's Body of Divinity, p. 399.

took this view of the subject. Mr. Perkins, one of the most systematic of them, speaks of the influence of the work of the law, as making way for the Gospel. '*And then*,' says he, 'succeeds seasonably, and comfortably, the work of the Gospel.'* Mr. Bolton, one of the most eloquent and experienced Divines of his *day*, observes,—'Let the power of the law first break and bruise, which is a *necessary preparative* for the plantation of grace; and then pour in (and spare not) the most precious oil of the sweetest Evangelical comfort. *But many, very many, mar all with missing this method*, either from want of sanctification in themselves, or skill to manage their Master's business.'† Mr. Rogers, of Dedham—a most experimental divine—speaks most strongly on this view—'Let none speak *against the preaching of the law*, for it is the wholesome way *that God himself and his servants in all ages have taken*. Preachers must *first humble men with the law*. The *law first humbles, then the Gospel comforts*. None can prove that faith was wrought in an instant at first, *without any preparation going before*.'‡ Greenham, a divine of the same school, highly esteemed in his day, briefly writes—'When the word is administered in any power and sincerity, *there doubtless the preaching of the law strikes in*, and the preaching of the Gospel bringeth us unto Christ.'§ Another writer of consideration observes—'Such is the nature of man, that, *before he can receive a true justifying* faith, he must as it were be *broken in pieces by the law*. We are to be led from the fear of slaves, through the fear of penitents,

* Perkins on the Nature and Practice of Repentance, chap. iii. on Rom. viii. 15.

† Bolton's Discourse on True Happiness, p. 176.

‡ Roger's Doctrine of Faith, pp. 97, 68, 63.

§ Greenham's Works, p. 139.

to the fear of sons.'* Gurnal expresses this view with his characteristic familiarity of illustration—'The sharp point of the law must prick the conscience, before the creature can by the promises of the Gospel be drawn to Christ. The field is not fit for the seed to be cast into it, till the plough hath broken it up; nor is the soul prepared to receive the mercy of the Gospel, till broken with the terrors of the law.'† This series of quotations may be concluded with the full and decided testimony of Dr. Owen, not more remarkable for his powerful defence of Christian doctrine, than for his deep insight into every part of experimental godliness—'Let no man think,' says he, 'to understand the Gospel, who knoweth nothing of the law. God's *constitution* and *the nature of things themselves have given the law the precedency* with respect to sinners; "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." And Gospel faith is the soul's acting according to the mind of God for deliverance from that state and condition, which it is cast under by the law. And all those descriptions of faith, which abound in the writings of learned men, which do not at least include in them a virtual respect unto this state and condition, or *the work of the law on the consciences of sinners*, are all of them vain speculations. There is nothing in this whole doctrine that I will more firmly adhere unto, than the necessity of the *conviction* mentioned, *previous unto true believing*, without which not one line of it can be understood aright; and men do but beat the air in their contention about it.'‡

We must not however expect to find these preparative workings of the law in all cases with the same

* Yates's Model of Divinity, Book ii chap. 26.
† Gurnal on Eph. vi. 19. ‡ Owen on Justification, chap. ii.

degree of intensity or consciousness. What Bishop Davenant says of faith—'that justification does not depend upon the degree or measure, but upon the truth of faith,'* is true of every part of the Divine work, in regard to the warranted comfort to be derived from it. Nor do we observe in every instance with equal distinctness the order of the precedent acts, or their separate operations and combined effect. We must be careful not to load the sinner with threatenings, from an apprehension of a superficial work of contrition. The genuine spirit of Evangelical humiliation is not the separate exclusive work of the law, but of the law preparatory to, and combined with, the Gospel —the sense of sin and misery connected with the hope of mercy. Still less must we insist upon these preparatory exercises as meritorious, or as entrenching in any degree upon the unconditional freeness of the Gospel. They are needful, not as qualifications to recommend us, but as predispositions to draw us, to Christ. We must come to him, if at all, upon the terms of his own gracious invitation, "without money and without price."† But the sense of misery is the preparative for the remedy. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." As Calvin remarks—'Christ is promised only to those who are humbled and confounded with the sense of their own sins.'‡ The invitation is specially addressed to those "that labour and are heavy laden;" and none but such will "incline their ear and come."

Mr. Newton observes, in the case of Mr. Grimshawe, 'that a Minister walking with God in a conscientious

* Non ex gradu, aut mensura fidei dependet justificatio, sed ex veritate. Daven. in Epist. ad Coloss. p. 21.

† Isaiah lv. 1.

‡ Calvin on Isaiah lxv. 1.

improvement of the light received, deeply convinced under the law, and but imperfectly acquainted with the Gospel, is peculiarly qualified to preach with effect to ignorent and wicked people, whose habits of sin have been strengthened by a long disregard of the Holy Law of God, and who have had no opportunity of hearing the Gospel. They cannot at first receive, or even understand, that accurate and orderly statement and discussion of Evangelical truths, which render Ministers, who are more advanced in knowledge, acceptable to judicious and enlightened hearers. But they may feel a close and faithful application to their consciences, and be "persuaded," by the terror of the Lord, "to consider their ways," before they are capable of being much influenced by the consideration of his tender mercies. The Minister is sufficiently before them, to point out the first steps in the way; and as he goes gradually forward, "growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Saviour," they gradually follow him. Thus many of our most eminent Evangelical modern preachers were led.'* The truth of these valuable remarks may be illustrated by the early history of Mr. Scott's change of sentiment.†

IV. *The establishment of the law by the Gospel* belongs also to the Scriptural Preaching of the law. The Apostle thus anticipates a feasible objection against his statement of justification—"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! *Yea, we establish the law.*"‡ *The faith or doctrine* of the

* Newton's Life of Grimshawe, pp. 44—46.

† See his Force of Truth.

‡ Rom. iii. 31. The expositions of many of the Christian Fathers on this text prove their defective views on subjects connected with the law. Origen expounds the establishment of the law by faith—'Quia Christus inquit: "Moses de me scripsit."'

Gospel "establishes the law" in its covenant *form*, as exhibiting a Divine Suretiship of obedience to the law, as the satisfactory price for justification. It fulfils it also in its *directive form*, by inculcating the obligations to obedience upon a stronger foundation, and fulfilling them in sincerity, from the principles of a divine life, and upon the irresistible impulse of evangelical motives. It is indeed only the faith of the Gospel, that saves us from the condemnation, and enables us for the obedience, of the law. Take away this principle, and we are under the full penalty of the broken law; nor is there any root on which to engraft a corrupt tree, that it might bring forth good fruit.

And thus the *grace of the Gospel* has a direct tendency to "establish the law" in its twofold character. What the doctrine of faith reveals, the grace of faith applies and receives—both for acceptance, in a consciousness of exposure to the penalty of the covenant; and for ability to exercise that "love, which is the fulfilling of the law."

Admitting that "the law was made void" by the Gospel—the Gospel could scarcely be the revelation of God. If the law be the transcript of the Divine image and a perfect rule of righteousness; and if conformity to its precepts be the essence of holiness; how can we conceive of a subsequent revelation from heaven, to annul its authority and obligation?

Ambrosius—'Quia ceremonalia scripturaliter implentur, et quod minus in moralibus lex continebat, in Evangelio additur: et quod tunc promittebatur futurum, fides advenisse testatur.' *Hieronymus*—'Quia fide probamus verum esse, quod lex dicit, testamentum testamento, legem legi . . .successuram.' As Parè remarks—'*Aliquid dicunt, non totum.*' Augustine entered far more clearly into the Apostle's meaning—'Lex non evacuatur, sed statuitur per fidem, quia fides impetrat gratiam, quâ lex impleatur.' De Spir. et Lit. c. 29. Again—'Literâ jubetur, spiritu donatur.' Epist. 200.

Christian! What part of the law do you desire to "make void?" whether that that inculcates love to God—or the corresponding obligation of love to your neighbour? Or do you not rather wish both parts to be confirmed by additional obligations? and do you not feel that the power of evangelical doctrines and motives establishes the love and strength of obedience with most delightful constraint.

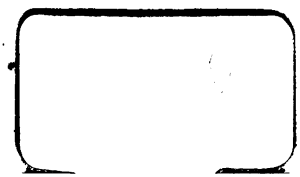
The whole discussion cannot but remind us of the importance of *accurately distinguishing* in our Ministry between the law and the Gospel; that we, through the misunderstanding of the Scriptures, do not take the law for the Gospel, nor the Gospel for the law; but skilfully discern and distinguish the voice of the one from the voice of the other.'* An indiscriminate application of either, or confusion of both, exposes us to the danger of preaching "another Gospel"†—greatly to the encouragement of a self-righteous temper, to the perplexity and distress of awakened consciences, and to the hindrance of all serious Christians.

But *the connexion of the two* is of the greatest moment. Let their distinctions be carefully preserved, and let their mutual dependance and connexion be also maintained. 'Worldly epicures and secure mammonists, to whom the doctrine of the law doth properly appertain, do receive and apply to themselves most principally the sweet promises of the Gospel.'‡ And therefore to preach the Gospel without the law, would encourage self-delusion. On the other hand, as Luther beautifully observes, 'As thunder without rain did more harm than good; so Ministers, that preach the

* Patrick's Places, ut supra. † Gal. i. 6—9.
‡ Patrick, ut supra.

terrors of the law, but do not, at the same time, drop in the dew of gospel instruction and consolation, are not "wise master-builders;" for they pull down, but build nothing up again.'

In fine—'This shows the ignorance and absurdity of those men, who cry down preaching of the law, as a course leading to despair and discontentment, though we find by St. Paul, that it leadeth to Christ. To preach the law alone by itself, we confess, is to pervert the use of it; neither have we any power or commission so to do (for we have "our power for edification, and not for destruction"). It was published as an appendant to the Gospel, and so must it be preached. It was published "in the hand of a Mediator," and must be preached in the hand of a Mediator. It was published *evangelically*, and it must be so preached. But yet we must preach the law, and that in its own fearful shapes; for, though it was published in mercy, it was published in thunder, fire, tempests, and darkness, even in the hand of a Mediator; for this is the method of the Holy Ghost, to convince first of sin, and then to reveal righteousness and refuge in Christ. The law is the forerunner, that makes room and prepares welcome in the soul for Christ.*

* Bishop Reynold's Works, p. 149.

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